A PASSAGE TO INDIA

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a play by

SANTHA RAMA RAU

from the novel by

E.M. FORSTER

edited for students by

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A NOTE ON E.M. FORSTER

Edward Morgan Forster was born in London on 1 January 1879. He was the great-grandson of Henry Thornton, a shining light of the Clapham sect and a Member of Parliament. His father died early, and he was brought up by his mother and his great-aunt, Marianne Thornton. He was educated as a day-boy at Tonbridge School. He went to Cambridge University where he came under the influence of Goldsworthy Lowes Dickinson (whose biography he wrote in 1934) and Oscar Browning. On securing a tripos at King's College in 1900, Forster travelled to Italy and Greece in 1901. His first short story, 'Albergo Empedocle', was published in 1903. In the same year he, along with Dickinson and others, founded *Independent Review*. In 1905 his first novel, *Where Angels Fear to Tread*, was published. It made a mark as a fictional recreation of the international situation and human relationships between the English and the Italians. Another novel on the same theme, *A Room With a View*, was published in 1908. In the meanwhile his intensely autobiographical work in fiction which explores his responses to Sawston and Cambridge, *The Longest Journey*, was published in 1907. His most ambitious work, *Howards End*, expressing his artistic responses to the Wilcoxes and the Schlegels, was published in 1910. In this novel the conflicts and dilemmas of the early phase of his career, the dichotomies which divide Sawston from Cambridge, England from Italy, a man of culture from a man of action, were apparently reconciled.

A Passage to India, Forster's most significant novel, was published in 1924. Forster visited India three times—first in 1912 when he was accompanied by Lowes Dickinson and R.C. Trevelyan. This visit covered the period from October 1912 to March 1913, a sojourn which brought Forster in close association with Ross Masood and Sir Tukoji III, the Maharaja of Dewas. In 1921 Forster visited India (from March to October) as Private Secretary to the Maharaja. He later wrote the biography of Sir Tukoji III, *The Hill of Devi*

(1953). His third visit took place in 1945 as an invitee of the Indian P.E.N. at its Jaipur session.

A Passage to India is now recognized as a great classic of twentieth-century British fiction. It is the story of human relationships, of Aziz and Fielding, and at the same time it is a recreation of Forsterian universe. Politically it is a realistic novel and in its exploration of the mystical Godbole, the baffling Marabar Caves, and the complex Mrs Moore, it attains a visionary quality and subtle beauty which make it a memorable work of fiction.

Santha Rama Rau's dramatization of *A Passage to India* was published in 1960. It was first staged at Oxford Playhouse on 19 January 1960. In 1962 (January to May) it was performed at New York. Santha Rama Rau's successful effort paved the way for the dramatization of *Howards End* by Lance Sieveking and Richard Cotrell. The earliest effort to dramatize a novel by Forster was made by S. Tait and K. Allott at Cambridge. They presented a stage version of *A Room with a View* in 1950. Santha Rama Rau's dramatization still remains the best of all the efforts in this direction.

Students are advised to consult John Colmer, E.M. Forster: The Personal Voice (*London: Routledge & Kegan Paul*, 1975), *K.W. Grandsen*, E.M. Forster, *Writers and Critics Series* (*Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd*, 1970), *Martial Rose*, E.M. Forster, *Literature in Perspective Series* (*London: Evans*, 1970) *and V.A. Shahane*, E.M. Forster: The Double Vision (*New Delhi: Arnold-Heinemann*, 1975).

CHARACTERS

in order of appearance

DR AZIZ, Assistant Civil Surgeon in the Government Hospital at Chandrapore

MR FIELDING, Principal of the Government College at Chandrapore

MRS MOORE, an elderly lady visiting her son in Chandrapore

MISS ADELA QUESTED, informally engaged to Mrs Moore's son and travelling with her

PROFESSOR GODBOLE, Mr Fielding's assistant at the Government College

RONNY HEASLOP, District Magistrate of Chandrapore, son of Mrs Moore

A LIEUTENANT, stationed with the Indian Army in Chandrapore

MRS MCBRYDE, wife of the Superintendent of Police for Chandrapore

MRS TURTON, wife of the Collector, or Chief Administrative Officer of Chandrapore

MRS BURTON
MRS LESLEY } wives of other civil servants
MRS COLLIN

MAJOR CALLENDAR, Chief Surgeon of the Government Hospital at Chandrapore

MR BURTON
MR FLETCHER } civil servants

MR TURTON, the Collector of Chandrapore

MR MCBRYDE, Superintendent of Police for Chandrapore
MRS CALLENDAR, wife of the Chief Surgeon
MR HAMIDULLAH, a lawyer and close friend of Dr Aziz
MR AMRITRAO, distinguished lawyer from Calcutta
MR DAS, Assistant Magistrate for Chandrapore

Servants, court attendants, guards, etc.

ACT ONE

The scene is the living-room of Mr. Fielding's house in the grounds of the Government College of Chandrapore, India. The house was converted from an ancient garden pavilion of Mogul times. It is a peculiarly beautiful room combining a spare Muslim elegance with the warmer additions of furniture and books that Fielding's personality has imposed on it. At the back of the stage a row of graceful arches, divided by slender wooden pillars painted a soft rather romantic blue, divides the room from a formal Mogul garden designed in the conventional pattern of lilyponds and careful flower beds set in a succession of terraces, connected by shallow marble steps. In the distance an almost naked man can be seen gathering waterchestnuts from a distant tank. Throughout the ensuing act a sporadic succession of people is seen crossing the garden, an occasional woman in a bright cotton sari carrying a basket or a pot on her head, walking barefoot, easily, sometimes raising an arm to steady a load; from time to time a man in loose white pyjamas and a shirt, a bright turban, stops to exchange a few words with the man at the tank; children, perhaps, running across absorbed in some game.

One has the sensation of being simultaneously indoors and out, of no rigid separation between the garden and the room, of pale gold light filling both with a kind of impersonal disdain of the

Indian scene outside and the casual gesture of Westernization in the room. On Stage Right are frosted glass doors which have been put in to partition off a section of this summer-house to serve for Fielding's bedroom. Stage Left is more open. There the entrance to the house is through another archway, with a glimpse of a light, charming, rather frivolous arcade beyond. The whole thing was built in—say—the eighteenth century as a pleasure pavilion, a place to sit and view the symmetry, the formulated perfection of the view, to talk, to recite poetry, to listen to the sound of the water tumbling from pond to pond. Something of this atmosphere remains—a bare, cool floor, for instance, with a mosaic pattern in it, a fugitive fragment of stylized painting on one of the inner walls, probably a rather stiff court scene.

The furniture is too unpretentious to impress itself as an anachronism. It adds a measure of Western comfort without detracting from the atmosphere. Somewhere, on a low table, tea things are set out and covered with a large white cloth—there is always a quantity of white cloths in India, servants carry them, people wind them over their heads, hang them across their shoulders, spread them here and there—in this case because of the dust, another essential component of the Indian air. Of course there are flowers.

It is four o'clock of a Spring afternoon (in India this means the beginning of the hot weather, two or two and a half months before the monsoons, the rains of high summer, begin to cool the country again). The date is somewhere in the early twenties. The stage is empty. FIELDING'S *shadow can be seen crossing and re-crossing the frosted glass doors, he is apparently looking for something and is in the process of dressing in his bedroom.*

DR. AZIZ *enters at Stage Left. He is a medium-sized, wiry Indian. He is full of energy—bounces slightly when he walks—he is volatile, talking quickly, expressively, with many movements of his hands. He has a sense of fantasy that leads him sometimes into ridicule and sometimes into poetry. He is formally and immaculately dressed in English clothes.*

AZIZ [*shouting cheerfully from the entrance*]: Mr. Fielding! Mr. Fielding! Mr. Fielding? [*sees his shadow on the glass door*] I have simply walked in unannounced. Will you forgive this informality?

FIELDING [*from the bedroom*]: Of course, of course! Please make yourself at home.

AZIZ [*takes this literally*]: May I really, Mr. Fielding? It's very good of you; I like unconventional behaviour so extremely.

FIELDING: I'm delighted.

AZIZ: The fact is I have been wanting to meet you for a long time. But where is one to meet in a wretched hole like Chandrapore. [*with a touch of irony*] Where will the poor Indian doctor run across the Exalted European Principal of the Government College?

FIELDING: My dear fellow.

AZIZ [*walks to the bedroom door*]: When you first came here—I'll tell you what I used to wish. I used to wish that you would fall ill so that we could meet that way.

FIELDING *laughs.* AZIZ *joins in the laughter. He begins to improvise.*

I said to myself, "How does Mr. Fielding look this morning? Perhaps pale? And the Civil Surgeon is pale too. Malaria, without a doubt. He will not be able to

attend on Mr. Fielding when the shivering commences. They will have to send for me instead."

FIELDING: You know me by sight then?

AZIZ: Of course, of course. Not only that, but I have heard your lectures. You're a celebrated student of Persian poetry. You know me?

FIELDING: I know you very well by name.

AZIZ: I say, Mr. Fielding.

FIELDING: Yes?

AZIZ: Guess what I look like before you come out. That will be a kind of game.

FIELDING: You're five feet nine inches tall——

AZIZ: Jolly good!

FIELDING: Well, it should be. I can see that much through the door.

AZIZ: Well, what else? Have I not a venerable white beard?

FIELDING: Oh blast!

AZIZ: Anything is wrong?

FIELDING: I've just trodden on my last back collar stud.

AZIZ: Take mine, take mine.

FIELDING: Have you a spare one?

AZIZ: Yes, yes, one minute.

FIELDING: Not if you're wearing it yourself.

AZIZ: No, no, one in my pocket.

He steps away from the door so that FIELDING *cannot see his outline, wrenches off his collar and pulls out the back stud, a gold one.*

Here it is!

FIELDING [*after a pause*]: But nobody carries a spare collar stud in his pocket.

AZIZ: I, always! In case of emergency.

FIELDING: Nonsense.

AZIZ *stares at the stud in his hand, dismayed. He puts it in his pocket, touchily.*

AZIZ: Indians are famous for talking nonsense, doubtless you know that.

FIELDING: All I meant is that I don't want to deprive you . . .

AZIZ [*sarcastically*]: No depriving, rest assured. It should be the highest of honours for me.

FIELDING [*matching his sarcasm, clearly irritated*]: Look, Dr. Aziz, keep your stud. I can easily send for a new one.

AZIZ: By all means! Yes, yes, by all means! Send your servant to the bazaar—get your new collar stud—an unsoiled collar stud—that is what Indians are for, isn't it?

FIELDING: What are you talking about?

AZIZ [*even more excited*]: Only an Englishman is friend enough to do a favour. I am wrong to offer. I see that.

FIELDING [*after a long pause*]: Dr. Aziz, please forgive me. Just a moment. It seems absurd to quarrel with a man one hasn't even seen. I am delighted and grateful to wear your collar stud.

AZIZ [*responding at once*]: Of course, of course! No trouble!

FIELDING *is seen tying the sash of a dressing-gown. He is wearing the trousers of his suit under the dressing-*

gown, socks and slippers. He is a large, shaggy man, untidy, greying, loose and easy in his movements. He smiles, shakes hands with AZIZ, *takes the stud.*

FIELDING: Many thanks. I'm ashamed of my boorishness.

AZIZ [*graciously*]: Such a small thing . . .

FIELDING: The fact is that my nerves are frayed. I've had a beastly day with Government inspection committees. [*he shakes his head*] Oh, God! Do sit down while I finish dressing—if you will forgive the unconventionality.

He continues his dressing slowly through the next few minutes.

AZIZ [*looking round the bedroom inquisitively*]: Very gladly. It makes me feel that we have been friends for a long time.

FIELDING: Well, that may be. I've been hauled over the coals all day about it. I'm not very popular with the higher-ups just now. They do not like unconventionality. "The British and the Indians must each keep their place," they tell me—like teams in some tiresome sort of game.

AZIZ: Don't Englishmen like sports?

FIELDING [*laughing*]: I can't be bothered with that sort when I'm trying to get my work done. However, I'm sure you didn't come here to listen to my troubles. Do sit down.

AZIZ [*enthralled with the room*]: But I always thought Englishmen kept their rooms so tidy. It seems this is not so. I need not be so ashamed.

He sits down gaily on the sofa, and forgetting himself entirely, draws his legs up under him.

Everything ranged coldly on shelves was what I thought. Shall I tell you something, Mr. Fielding? This is the first time I have ever been invited to an Englishman's house. Sometimes I have been summoned in case of sickness when my superior Major Callendar is away. But for a jolly social occasion like this—informal, as equals—never. No, no, never, never.

FIELDING [*looking at him intensely*]: Really? How—how astonishing.

AZIZ: Yes, really. But not astonishing. For I am not a bootlicker. I am not one of those.

FIELDING: I don't mean that. I mean that there seem to be no bounds to our stupidity in India. Why must we add social insult to political injury, I wonder?

AZIZ: Very good! Very good, Mr. Fielding. Social insult to political injury. I shall remember that to tell my friends.

FIELDING: It can't be a new idea to them, surely.

AZIZ: The idea, no. But to hear it from an Englishman, yes. Let me assure you, oh yes. We talk such things among ourselves, my friends, and I——

FIELDING: However, if it's all the same to you, I'd appreciate it if you didn't mention that remark to them. It was just—just a casual observation.

AZIZ: And a true one. If you so wish, I shall not mention. But—forgive the following question, Mr. Fielding—may I ask why?

FIELDING: Oh, no particular reason. It's just that

there's really no point in making trouble. I'm in enough hot water as it is.

AZIZ [*touchy again*]: You are worried about the indiscretion of my friends?

FIELDING [*uncomfortably*]: No, no, of course not. [*meaning, "Yes, perhaps."*]

AZIZ: Indians, too, understand discretion. That is not reserved only for the British.

FIELDING: Come, come, Aziz, I wasn't insulting your friends.

AZIZ: That is good, for they are very big-hearted chaps. You know old Hamidullah, the lawyer? Or Mahmoud Ali—ah, there's a philosopher!—or the Nawab Bahadur? Perhaps you have never heard of them?

FIELDING: I've heard of them. I suppose none of you ever go to the Bridge parties?

AZIZ: As Muslims, Mr. Fielding, we do not play cards.

FIELDING: I'm sorry—it's not that kind of bridge. The Bridge is one of Turton's depressing little jokes—he means a party to bridge the gulf between East and West.

AZIZ: Ah, I see. A Bridge party. Very witty.

FIELDING *nods.*

No, we never go to those. My friends say to me, "What can we expect from these English? Scorn, no understanding of our customs and our civilization—social insults, you see—Better leave them alone."

FIELDING: They may very well be right, you know.

AZIZ: No, Mr. Fielding. Excuse me, I must disagree. You see, I think friendship is possible—not only possible but important. Yes, yes, I know what you will tell me—

my friends tell me the same—oil and water, we do not mix. We have our political differences. You do not like our food and our customs and we try to like yours, but—[*he shrugs*] In any event, you think us backward, we find you uncouth. What to do? I say there must be friendship. Nothing will shake me in that idea. Nothing, Mr. Fielding! Nothing! I say that the friendship between two individuals is bigger than all those other things. You agree?

FIELDING: Well, I never heard of any friendships that began at those Bridge parties.

AZIZ: My friends are wise when they advise me not to go—though imagine, I might have met *you* there, Mr. Fielding. Also I am curious about the English Club where we may not enter.

FIELDING [*laughing*]: You would find it excessively boring—billiards, tennis, shop talk in the smoking-room, drinks in the bar where Englishmen don't mind having a few too many since there are no Indians to observe them. It's quite deadly really.

AZIZ: Then why do you go?

FIELDING: Oh, I don't know. If I didn't I suppose people would think me peculiar, and I have found that it is simpler not to make enemies—they take up too much time.

AZIZ: Or friends either? They, too, take up time? You bring tears to my eyes, Mr. Fielding! Such a lonely life as you describe! Shall I tell you something else? This is a Persian poem that I shall have inscribed on my tomb when I die! Please listen.

"Alas without me for thousands of years
The Rose will blossom and the Spring will bloom
But those who have secretly understood my heart—
They will approach and visit the grave where I lie."

Is that not beautiful? Is it not profound philosophy? That, you see, is what I want . . . the secret understanding of the heart!

FIELDING [*smiling*]: I am not so ambitious. I only want to teach—particularly here—I can't complicate my life with things that would interfere with that.

AZIZ: If I were so good as you in my profession——

FIELDING: You flatter me.

AZIZ: No flattery! I assure you! I have heard your lectures.

FIELDING: Why the hell do we wear collars?

AZIZ *works on the stud.*

AZIZ: We wear them to pass the police.

FIELDING [*ready to laugh*]: *What?*

AZIZ: If I'm biking in English dress . . . [*pantomiming*] starch collar, hat with ditch—they take no notice. When I wear a fez, they cry, "Your lamp's out." Let me put that in, Mr. Fielding. Lord Curzon did not consider this when he asked natives of India to retain their picturesque costumes—Hooray! Stud's gone in. —Sometimes I shut my eyes and dream I have splendid clothes again and I'm riding into battle behind Alamgir. The Moghul Empire at its height and Alamgir reigning at Delhi upon the Peacock Throne. Mr. Fielding, don't you think India must have been beautiful then?

FIELDING: I do indeed. Well, you will have an opportunity to describe it all to the two ladies who are coming to tea to meet you—I think you know them.

AZIZ: Meet me? I know no ladies.

FIELDING: Really? Not Mrs. Moore and Miss Quested?

AZIZ: Oh yes—I remember. Mrs. Moore. An excessively aged lady. But will you please repeat the name of her companion?

FIELDING: Miss Quested. You can tell her about the Peacock Throne if you like. She's a Kensington intellectual. [*very gently mocking*] She tells me she wants to know the *real* India.

AZIZ: I see.

FIELDING: She was saying the other night at the Club that she was tired of seeing picturesque Indians pass before her as a frieze, that now she wanted to meet some of them.

AZIZ [*disappointed*]: So this is to be a Bridge party after all.

FIELDING [*quickly*]: Oh no—please forgive me. I have made Miss Quested sound a prig—which is not at all what I intended. I thought it very sensible of her to want to meet Indians. If she's really going to make her life in this country.

AZIZ: Ah, now I see.

Significantly, for he has taken FIELDING'S *remark to mean that* MISS QUESTED *will make her life with* FIELDING *himself.*

She is to settle here in Chandrapore altogether?

FIELDING: Well, one doesn't know yet for sure. She may be getting married here.

AZIZ [*sincerely*]: I am honoured that you tell me this on such short acquaintance. I mean this most sincerely.

And without doubt I will attempt to entertain her in my poor way.

FIELDING [*he hasn't caught* AZIZ'*s assumption*]: Well, that's very good of you. But actually, she's not the reason why I invited you this afternoon. Mrs. Moore, who has chaperoned her on this trip to India, told me that she knew you and wanted very much to see you again. She asked me particularly to invite you. So naturally, I agreed.

AZIZ [*offended that it hasn't been* FIELDING'*s own idea*]: Naturally. The ladies must have their wish. Though I cannot imagine why Mrs. Moore should have asked since I don't really consider that I know her. I only met her accidentally in my mosque. I had gone there one night, alone, for a moment of rest and meditation. She moved in the darkness and I thought she was a ghost. I daresay I frightened her, too, for when I saw in the moonlight that it was a European woman I shouted out, "Madam, madam, madam! This is a holy place for Muslims. You must take your shoes off."

FIELDING: And did she?

AZIZ [*his good humour restored by the recollection*]: She couldn't. She had already taken them off and left them in the entrance in the correct way. It is remarkable, is it not, that she should have taken the trouble? So few European ladies would, especially if thinking no one is there to see.

FIELDING: Did you tell her that?

AZIZ: Oh yes. And she replied in poetry. She said, "That makes no difference. God is here." Poetry, you see. Afterwards we talked about her children and mine.

FIELDING: So you are friends after all.

AZIZ: Oh yes. I know Mrs. Moore well. She is a great friend of mine, and besides, she is an oriental.

FIELDING: How do you mean?

AZIZ: She told me she didn't understand people very well, but she knew how to like or dislike them.

FIELDING: So that's oriental. I wonder if my assistant, Godbole, would agree with that definition. He's supposed to be coming to tea today, too. We must ask him this afternoon. If he shows up, that is.

AZIZ: Why should he not show up? All Indians are not so unreliable. And for the honour of taking tea with the Principal?

FIELDING: I don't know how much of an honour it is. When I have asked him he has always found some excuse on previous occasions.

AZIZ: Ah, the good professor is no doubt too much in awe of you, Mr. Fielding.

FIELDING: More likely, he finds my food unclean and is too polite to say so. He is orthodox, you know.

AZIZ: Oh yes. Such Brahmins are very strict. All are immensely subtle. Hindu philosophy is too much for me. We poor Muslims, we rely on our heart, not so much on our intellect. The feelings of our heart will lead us to God, do you not agree?

FIELDING: Well, we are taught that God is love, but I have never——

AZIZ: You see? You see? We are brothers after all, Mr. Fielding.

FIELDING [*laughing*]: My dear chap! I can't keep up with you—you make my head swim!

AZIZ [*laughing with him*]: That is very good—it is the first step. Taking to another element, we will swim together and so become friends!

A SERVANT *enters from Stage Left and stands in the archway. Immediately behind him are* MRS. MOORE, *an elderly grey-haired woman with a rather absent manner, and* MISS QUESTED, *a thin blondish young woman in her late twenties. She has a vigorous, enquiring way about her, verging sometimes on nervousness. She is certainly intelligent and cultivated and to Western eyes not unattractive. To Indians she would seem pitifully ugly—the freckles, the colourless hair, the flattish chest, the lack of grace and feminine modesty. A beautiful woman might have troubled* AZIZ *but because* MRS. MOORE *seemed to him so old and* MISS QUESTED *so plain, his manner to both remains easy and straightforward.*

FIELDING [*walking across the room to escort the women from the door*]: Good afternoon, good afternoon. You had no trouble finding the way?

QUESTED: None at all. Mr. Heaslop sent us in his carriage. He'll be coming later to take us back.

AZIZ [*buoyantly from across the room*]: Oh what a pleasure to see Mr. Heaslop later on. If he comes to fetch you, indeed you are in good hands.

MISS QUESTED *looks at him rather startled by his tone, for he is talking about her fiancé.* FIELDING *quickly begins introductions.*

FIELDING: Mrs. Moore, I believe that you and Dr. Aziz have already met.

MOORE: Yes indeed. How nice to see you again!

AZIZ walks to the group by the archway to shake hands.

FIELDING: Miss Quested, Dr. Aziz.

MISS QUESTED smiles in recognition of the name—MRS. MOORE has mentioned the incident in the mosque. She moves with AZIZ to the sofa while MRS. MOORE finds a straight-back chair and FIELDING mutters instructions to the SERVANT about tea.

QUESTED: Dr. Aziz, I am especially pleased to meet you. I feel that perhaps you can help me to *understand* India.

AZIZ: Who understands India? Not the Indians, at least.

FIELDING: Now won't you all sit down?

QUESTED: I heard from Mrs. Moore how kind you were to her in the mosque, and how interesting. She learned more about India in those few minutes' talk with you than in the three weeks since we landed.

AZIZ: Oh please do not mention a little thing like that. Is there anything else I may tell you about my country?

QUESTED: A disappointment we had this morning; I wonder if you could explain, of course it may be some form of Indian etiquette.

AZIZ: There is no question of etiquette. We are by nature a most informal people.

An astonished silence from the others greets this remark. AZIZ is unaware of it. FIELDING starts to say something but is gently interrupted.

MOORE: I was afraid we had blundered and given offence.

AZIZ: That is even more impossible. But may I know the facts?

QUESTED: An Indian lady and gentleman had invited us to call on them and were to send their carriage for us this morning at nine. It has never come. We waited and waited and waited.

FIELDING [*trying to smooth the matter over*]: Some misunderstanding, I'm sure.

QUESTED: Oh no, it wasn't that. They even put off going to Calcutta to entertain us.

FIELDING: I wouldn't worry about it, anyway.

QUESTED [*a little heatedly*]: That's exactly what everyone tells me. But if one doesn't worry, how is one ever going to *understand*?

AZIZ: I think they were ashamed of their house and that is why they did not send.

FIELDING: That's very possible.

QUESTED: I do so hate mysteries.

FIELDING: Very English of you.

QUESTED: I dislike them not because I'm English, but—from a personal point of view.

MOORE [*interrupting vaguely*]: I like mysteries, but I rather dislike muddles.

FIELDING: A mystery is a muddle.

MOORE [*unemphatically*]: Oh, do you think so, Mr. Fielding?

FIELDING: Well, a mystery is a high-sounding word for a muddle. Aziz and I know that India's a muddle.

MOORE: India—Oh what an alarming idea!

AZIZ [*who has been listening to this exchange in some bewilderment, moving his head from side to side as if he were*

at a tennis match]: There'll be no muddle when you come to visit me in my house. Mrs. Moore and every-one—I invite you all—oh please.

MOORE: That is most kind of you, Dr. Aziz, I shall be delighted.

QUESTED: I too! [*she produces a small book from her purse*] May I write down the address?

AZIZ [*horrified—they have taken a moment of politeness seriously*]: How sad that my bungalow is terrible! It is near the bazaar. There is no room at all, and even that is infested with small black flies. Oh, but we will talk of something else now. See this beautiful room! See those curves at the bottom of the arches. What delicacy! It is the architecture of Question and Answer. Mrs. Moore, you are in *India*; I am not joking. Imagine—now, imagine I am some high official of the eighteenth century. This is my audience hall. I am doing justice here. A poor widow who has been robbed comes to me and I give her fifty rupees. To another, with some different complaint, I give a hundred—I should like that.

MOORE [*smiling*]: Rupees don't last forever. But I agree, the modern method does seem to lack imagination—or humanity. But rupees don't last forever.

AZIZ: My rupees would last. God would give me more when He saw that I gave.

QUESTED: I had thought that our penal code was one of our more successful achievements in India. Mr. Heaslop has explained to me that there was no comprehensive system of justice for all of India before the British rule.

AZIZ: Justice? Oh, Miss Quested, you speak of something else. Yes, yes, I agree the British official can administer the law, but it takes a Prince to give the people justice. Oh, indeed yes, [*for he sees a doubtful look on* MISS QUESTED's *face*] because justice is giving, always giving, always kindness and more giving. I think we would never punish anyone.

FIELDING *is busy serving tea.* MRS. MOORE *smiles and nods her agreement and pleasure in* AZIZ. MISS QUESTED *listens intently, trying hard to understand this foreign point of view.*

MOORE: How different from my son's conception of being a magistrate!

QUESTED: But, Dr. Aziz—is there a satisfactory alternative to the punishment of criminals? You see, in England I served on a committee for the improvement of prison conditions and of course——

AZIZ [*interrupting buoyantly*]: Poor criminal! Give him another chance! It only makes a man worse to go to prison and be corrupted. We punish no one, no one in my palace and in the evening we will give a great banquet with a nautch and lovely girls shall shine on every side of the tank with fireworks in their hands, and all shall be feasting and happiness until the next day, when there shall be justice as before . . . fifty rupees, a hundred, a thousand . . . till peace comes. Ah, why didn't we live in that time? . . .

MOORE [*laughing*]: But India is still beautiful, think of our mosque.

AZIZ: Mrs. Moore, do you remember our mosque?

MOORE: Of course.

AZIZ: Do you remember how we saw the moon caught in the tank of water? Trembling and bigger than the real moon? Do you remember?

MOORE: I will never forget it.

AZIZ: Do you know that the water comes down from our mosque and fills the garden in Mr. Fielding's house? A skilful arrangement of our Emperors. They loved water. Wherever they went they created fountains, gardens, hammams——

QUESTED [*producing her little notebook in which she writes down the foreign words as she comes across them*]: What was that? Hammams? How do you spell that, please?

AZIZ: A hammam is a bath . . . but oh, Miss Quested, it is a beautiful luxurious bath. Imagine yourself a princess, Miss Quested, your black hair flowing down to your waist, polished and shining like the wing of a bird, face is round like the moon, breasts like pomegranates. You are surrounded by your handmaidens who rub your skin with sandalwood oil, and perfume the water of the hammam with musk, and then scatter over it rose petals for beauty. Somewhere in the garden a bul-bul is singing. Oh, there is no sweeter sound than the bul-bul. You step out of your veils and into the water, and——

FIELDING *clears his throat noisily, half-smiling at the weird contrast between the straight-backed, unvoluptuous figure of* MISS QUESTED *and* AZIZ'S *description.*

FIELDING. Aziz, give Mrs. Moore another cup of tea, please.

AZIZ: A pleasure, a pleasure. [*he fills her cup*] And Miss Quested too.

QUESTED: Oh yes, please.

AZIZ [*he takes the pot over to her and as he pours says*]: Pretend that this is sherbet you are drinking . . . the drink of those beautiful, voluptuous princesses . . .

MISS QUESTED, uncomfortable and alarmed by AZIZ's extravagance, looks up at him as he speaks, bending over her. Her hand trembles and the tea spills over her dress and the sofa. She jumps up, the cup shatters.

QUESTED: Oh, I am sorry . . . look what I've done . . . oh dear . . .

FIELDING: It doesn't matter a bit. [*shouts*] Ranjit!

The SERVANT appears to clean up the mess.

QUESTED: Oh, I *am* so sorry . . . I don't know what got into me . . .

AZIZ: Miss Quested, shall I tell you what we say? We say that to spill food or drink is the sign of a generous heart, full to overflowing, you see.

FIELDING looks at him gratefully and makes an indication of a Muslim salaam. AZIZ returns it, smiling.

QUESTED [*more at ease now*]: That makes me feel better. [*to FIELDING*] Oh, I hope I haven't ruined your sofa. I am not usually so clumsy.

FIELDING: As Aziz says, not clumsiness, only generosity of spirit.

He is laughing.

QUESTED [*laughing too*]: Well, at least I have learned this afternoon how to make a virtue out of an ineptitude.

GODBOLE *enters. He is middle-aged, erect, dressed in Indian clothes, a large red and yellow caste mark on his forehead. He is polite, enigmatic. He does not shake hands, but brings the palms together in a namaskar . . . the Indian greeting.*

FIELDING: Ah Godbole, I've got you here at last. You already know Aziz. Here are two new visitors to Chandrapore. Mrs. Moore, Miss Quested. My elusive assistant, Professor Godbole.

MRS. MOORE *nods to* GODBOLE. MISS QUESTED *rather awkwardly copies Godbole's namaskar.*

Mrs. Moore, as I expect you know, is the mother of our City Magistrate.

AZIZ: Of Mr. Heaslop? Mrs. Moore, how can that be?

MOORE: My first husband, Ronny's father, died.

AZIZ: And Moore! Who is Moore?

MOORE: I married again. It is not considered extraordinary in England.

AZIZ: I see. I see. Well, then, Mrs. Moore we are in the same box. My wife is dead also. Now we have only our children. My children are the greatest joy to me. Yours too, Mrs. Moore?

MOORE: A joy and an anxiety.

AZIZ [*rather naughtily*]: Alas for poor Mr. Fielding, he has no children! Neither the joys nor the anxieties! Does that not give you the cause for concern, Mr. Fielding?

FIELDING: Not in the least.

AZIZ: This indifference is what the oriental will never understand. Just think—your name will die out entirely——

FIELDING: I suppose so [*laughing*]—unless, of course, I do get married after all.

AZIZ [*delightedly*]: It is still possible! I know, I know! And allow me to wish you much happiness in advance.

GODBOLE: And I will send you up some few healthy sweets on that occasion. I will give myself that pleasure.

AZIZ: I tell you what, Mr. Fielding, we will make your visit to me a celebration . . . a celebration in advance . . . that is the best kind!

FIELDING: Nothing elaborate when we come to visit you. [*to the ladies*] Isn't that so?

QUESTED: Oh, of course. Please don't disarrange your household.

AZIZ: Not in my house—it is too dreadful!

GODBOLE: The house is but a shell. Inside, the living creature.

AZIZ: But Professor, this creature would be dead of shame. I know what! I invite you all to visit me in the Marabar Caves. When I return to Chandrapore, that is.

MOORE: You are going away, Dr. Aziz?

AZIZ: A brief visit, no more, to a relative in Calcutta. [*laughing*] He has so many daughters he needs some masculine conversation!

QUESTED: Well, when you get back, then?

AZIZ: Indeed! Please do not forget . . . we picnic in the Marabar Caves.

FIELDING: Excellent.

AZIZ: Godbole, you will join us?

GODBOLE: Oh, that is a most magnificent entertainment! But have not the ladies already visited our caves?

QUESTED: No, I've not even heard of them.

AZIZ: Not *heard* of them? The Marabar Caves in the Marabar Hills? Why they are one of the greatest wonders of the world.

QUESTED: I'm sure that someone like you, Dr. Aziz, who has seen them so often will find me foolish . . . but tell me what I should look for when I get there.

AZIZ: Unfortunately, I have never visited the caves myself. Work or private business has prevented me, and besides they are very far away.

FIELDING [*laughing*]: My dear Aziz!

QUESTED: Professor Godbole, you have seen the Caves? [*he nods*] Let me ask, are they large caves?

GODBOLE: No, not large.

MOORE: Do describe them, Professor Godbole.

GODBOLE: It will be a great honour. [*longish pause*] There is an entrance in the rock . . . Which you enter . . . And through the entrance is the cave.

FIELDING: Something like the caves at Elephanta?

GODBOLE: Oh no, not at all. At Elephanta there are sculptures of Siva and Parvati. There are no sculptures at Marabar.

AZIZ: They are immensely holy, no doubt?

GODBOLE: Oh no, oh no.

FIELDING: Ornamented in some way?

GODBOLE: Oh no.

AZIZ: Why do we talk so much about the Marabar Caves? Perhaps that is our empty brag.

GODBOLE: No, I should not quite say that.

AZIZ: Then they *are* deservedly famous? Yes?

GODBOLE: Oh yes, famous with reason. And terrible . . . with reason?

QUESTED: Terrible? But how can a cave be terrible? Especially when there is nothing there.

GODBOLE: Miss Quested, pardon me, there is everything there. For in nothing, there is all.

QUESTED: I'm sorry, I'm not sure that I understand you. Is it the emptiness that is terrible?

GODBOLE: Ah, if it were a question of emptiness, then, indeed, the caves would be empty and nobody would go there. Why would they become famous, in such a case? In our religion, in Hinduism, you see, everything has two or many faces. In the terror there is also calm and comfort. The creator is also the destroyer. Kali, Parvati, Durga, Uma are equally consorts of Siva.

QUESTED: I thought you said there were no carvings there?

GODBOLE: There are none.

MOORE [*vaguely*]: Adela doesn't believe in ghosts. She only believes the evidence of her eyes.

QUESTED: Well, there must be *something* to see.

GODBOLE: There is enlightenment or obscurity. Nothing to see except with the inner eye. Therefore I would advise you to choose some other environs for your picnic.

AZIZ: For *our* picnic, Godbole. Surely you will not refuse my invitation.

GODBOLE: I am honoured to accept.

QUESTED: Then, at least *you* are not afraid, Professor? I must say you have piqued my curiosity to a point

where it must be satisfied. Do let us make the appointment definite.

GODBOLE: By all means. I have no doubt that you will find the Caves very beautiful.

AZIZ: Excellent. Then, Professor, describe their beauties to these ladies, please.

GODBOLE: It will be a pleasure. [*a longish pause while* GODBOLE *thinks*] However, I think I will forgo the pleasure.

FIELDING [*to break an awkward silence*]: Mrs. Moore, would you like to see our College gardens? We are rather proud of them.

MOORE: Thank you. I am very fond of gardens... I find that they repay love in a way that human beings very often do not.

FIELDING *looks to* MISS QUESTED *to join them.*

QUESTED: I'll stay here if I may and talk to Professor Godbole and Dr. Aziz. This is such a rare and valuable opportunity for me.

MRS. MOORE *and* FIELDING *leave through the garden.* MISS QUESTED *settles back on the sofa and to the scarcely concealed astonishment of the Indians, lights a cigarette. She doesn't notice their embarrassment.*

QUESTED: Do you know, this is the very first time that I've had a chance to talk to Indians since I've been in this country? At the Club, where we usually go of an evening, people never seem to mention India or Indians. I don't know what happens to them—the Callendars, the McBrydes——

AZIZ: The Turtons and the Burtons...

QUESTED: Well, I'm sure they're all reasonable people in England. But somehow, when they get to India . . . they become . . . I don't know . . .

AZIZ: Unkind?

QUESTED: They become insensitive, certainly . . .

GODBOLE: They have, perhaps, lost one reality, and have not yet found another?

QUESTED [*puzzled*]: That may be true . . . But the odd thing is that they don't seem to be even *interested* in India—and I feel that we can only be of some good here if we have . . . well, a very different attitude.

AZIZ: Oh, I agree . . . such as Mr. Fielding's attitude. He understands poor Indian. Godbole will bear out that fact, isn't it?

GODBOLE: Yes, yes. He makes fine principal of Government College, Chandrapore. A very impartial man.

QUESTED: Yes, I am sure he is. But you see the thing that is really worrying me . . . I mean, if I *were* to settle in India—for whatever reason . . . I mean, if I *had* a reason to stay on, what could I do? What would be the most *useful* thing for India? Is that a foolish question, Professor Godbole?

GODBOLE: Not foolish. No, no. In our ancient Sanskrit writing, *Bhagavad-gita* we are told, " Even the wise are perplexed as to what is action and what is inaction." Not at all foolish.

QUESTED: Then can you help me with the answer?

GODBOLE: Ah yes. Use and abuse are the same in the end.

QUESTED: The *same*?

GODBOLE: Without self-knowledge.

QUESTED *shakes her head confusedly and looks, enquiringly at* AZIZ.

AZIZ [*warm and earnest. He jumps up to sit next to* MISS QUESTED *on the sofa*]: In any case, why be useful, Miss Quested? Just love India. That is the greatest gift.

QUESTED [*shifting nervously deep into her corner of the sofa*]: No, but I'm serious, Dr. Aziz. In England I'm used to leading an active life . . . so different from the kind of life the English wives lead out here.

GODBOLE: To love is very active. It can take all your life . . . if you accept fully all its meanings.

QUESTED [*smiling indulgently at* GODBOLE, *but looking immediately back at* AZIZ]: Professor, you are probably right, but I'm not a philosopher. I need something less abstract . . .

AZIZ [*gaily*]: Miss Quested, I tell you what. Think with your heart for this time, not your head. Heart! Heart, I say!

MISS QUESTED *gets up suddenly and almost involuntarily, then she has to look for a pretext . . . she puts out her cigarette, and carefully chooses a chair across the room from* AZIZ *in which to sit.*

QUESTED [*getting herself under control*]: But . . . but that's just . . . just what I can't do. [*with spirit*] What's the point of having a brain if one doesn't use it? I intend to use mine to understand what I can about India and then to put that knowledge to some good.

AZIZ: But you'll never understand without your heart...

QUESTED: And I think I'll never understand with it. [*with some antagonism*] Perhaps that is the difference between orientals and westerners.

AZIZ: But Mrs. Moore feels . . . with her mind, too.

QUESTED: Dr. Aziz, I'm sorry. I don't mean to criticize—but I can't agree with the oriental idea of women . . . that we mustn't use our minds. That we should be just wives and mothers . . .

GODBOLE: There is a higher ideal, perhaps?

QUESTED: Oh, Professor! Oh yes! At least, I think so. Mrs. Moore belongs to another generation . . . things were different in her day . . .

AZIZ [*coldly*]: How difficult to explain this to Indians!

QUESTED [*rather nastily*]: I can see that men might not wish to relinquish their privileges.

AZIZ: Where there is heart, privilege does not matter. The English have many privileges in India . . .

QUESTED: And no feelings? Is that what you are saying?

AZIZ: I have no wish to find fault.

QUESTED [*slightly heated*]: But you must! You must! Civilized people can discuss things without getting heated, surely. That's what I *want*!

AZIZ: And what I want, Miss Quested, is only that you should enjoy yourself in India.

QUESTED [*getting worked up and disturbed*]: Oh, picnics—and enjoyment—of course they're part of one's life ... but my real worry is this: if I *did* stay in India, for a long time, that is . . . I might simply become another idle Englishwoman—what you call an Anglo-Indian.

GODBOLE: Oh never, Miss Quested. You would always be too thoughtful.

QUESTED: I'm told we all get thoughtless after a year. I know I can't . . . I mean, *couldn't* . . . avoid the label. What I should hope to avoid is the mentality. I feel that any modern, educated person has a duty to the community in which he lives, India, that is. So you see, enjoyment just isn't enough . . .

AZIZ: It is everything——

QUESTED [*more heated*]: Life is more than frivolity . . .

AZIZ [*equally heated*]: I'm talking about enjoyment . . . giving yourself to your feelings . . .

QUESTED: But Dr. Aziz——

AZIZ: Without it, Miss Quested, please understand me . . . without it you will never love India and Indians will never love you . . .

QUESTED: Love? [*a shocked silence*] Well—I only meant that I hoped I would get along and be able to do some good.

AZIZ [*indifferently*]: I see that my idea of a picnic has not pleased you. Perhaps we should think of some other, more suitable entertainment.

QUESTED [*penitent and concerned. She walks over to him*]: Oh please, Dr. Aziz—please, I hope I haven't offended you. I . . . it's just that India is so big and difficult to grasp, and I have so many decisions to make . . .

AZIZ [*smiling*]: I wish you good fortune with your "decision".

QUESTED: I must hold on to the best and the most rational part of me . . .

GODBOLE: We learn to protect ourselves when we learn we have something to fear.

GODBOLE *smiles and nods. From the garden a voice is heard calling "Hallo! Hall-o!"* RONNY, HEASLOP *enters from the garden, and pauses under the blue arches looking around at the room and its occupants. He is an extremely good looking man and that justifies a lot of his insensitivity to a girl like* MISS QUESTED *who hovers on the edge of intellectuality.*

HEASLOP [*in annoyance*]: Well, here you are. What's happened to Fielding? Where's my mother?

The INDIANS *have stood up, but he doesn't look at them.*

QUESTED [*coolly*]: Good evening, Ronny.

HEASLOP: I want you and mother at once. There's to be polo.

QUESTED: I thought there was to be no polo.

HEASLOP: Everything's altered. Come along, and I'll tell you all about it.

AZIZ: Good evening. Mr. Heaslop.

GODBOLE: Your mother will return shortly, sir. There is but little to see in our poor college.

HEASLOP [*paying no attention to the* INDIANS]: We must hurry, my dear. [*looks around*] Perhaps I should send a servant to find my mother.

QUESTED [*still cold*]: Surely we shouldn't leave like this.

AZIZ [*with rather offensive friendliness, pats* HEASLOP *on the arm*]: Come along in and join us, Mr. Heaslop; sit down until your mother turns up.

HEASLOP [*turning away*]: Boy! Boy! [*a pause*] What's the matter with Fielding's servants? Have they all

decided to take a holiday? I dare say they're loafing in their quarters, drinking tea . . . Boy! Boy!

AZIZ *steps forward about to say something angrily.* GODBOLE *puts a hand on his arm and stops him.*

GODBOLE [*gently*]: Please allow us the honour, sir, of fetching Mrs. Moore and Mr. Fielding for you.

He leads AZIZ *away and* MISS QUESTED *watches them until they are out of hearing.*

QUESTED [*turning sharply to* HEASLOP]: Ronny, I'm appalled . . .

HEASLOP: As well you might be. I'm appalled too, I don't know what's come over Fielding.

QUESTED: Mr. Fielding? What has *he* done?

HEASLOP: Well . . . I'm the sun-dried bureaucrat, no doubt; still I don't like to see an English girl left smoking cigarettes with two Indians.

QUESTED: This particular English girl stayed here, as she smokes, by her own wish.

HEASLOP: Yes, that's all very well in England.

QUESTED: I really can't see the difference . . . or the harm.

HEASLOP: If you can't see, you can't see . . . Can't you at least see that fellow's a bounder?

QUESTED: He isn't a bounder. He just got nervous, that's all.

HEASLOP: What could have upset his precious nerves?

QUESTED [*trying to bring the disturbing ideas* AZIZ *has suggested safely down to an ordinary level*]: I don't know. He was all right until you arrived. In fact he was very . . . interesting.

HEASLOP [*cheerfully*]: Well, it's nothing I've said. I never even spoke to him.

QUESTED [*turning away in exasperation*]: O Ronny . . . it's just impossible.

HEASLOP: Nothing's impossible, only difficult. Don't worry, everyone's temper gets short during this heat.

QUESTED: But this has nothing to do with the weather.

HEASLOP: Everything has something to do with the weather in India. But don't fret—after we're married you won't have to suffer through it again, I promise you. I'll pack you off to the hills every April . . . I'm not one to keep a wife grilling in the plains.

QUESTED: Really, it isn't *that*. I have a sudden . . . sort of vision of what life here would be . . . the Club in the evenings, the hills in the hot weather.

HEASLOP: It's not a bad life as long as we do our work and keep to ourselves.

QUESTED: But that's just it—I think that part of our work is *not* keeping to ourselves.

HEASLOP: My dear, I know this country better than you. We all come out here with the honest wish to do well, not exactly mingle socially, but at least to close the gap a little. One soon finds it only leads to trouble. India isn't a drawing room. We're in India to do justice and keep the peace. Them's my sentiments.

QUESTED [*quietly*]: Your sentiments are those of a god.

HEASLOP [*trying to make amends*]: India likes gods.

QUESTED: And Englishmen like posing as gods.

HEASLOP: Honestly, Adela, what do you want me to do? Lose such power as I have for doing good in this country because I don't slap Indians on the back?

QUESTED: Of course not . . .

HEASLOP: Well, it's what you're asking. You don't seem to realize what my work involves—that the whole value of my job depends on reputation for utter fairness. It's the tradition of British justice. [*embarrassed*] It's not the kind of thing one goes *on* about, but I think it's a fine tradition.

QUESTED: Oh, of course . . . so do I . . . but, Ronny, why can't you be pleasant to Indians?

HEASLOP: Look, Adela, in any other country it would be different, but not in India. You'll soon find out that if I were to make friends with an Indian the gossip would be all over the bazaar in a minute. I'd be known as the kind of official an Indian can "get round". Don't you see how difficult and embarrassing it would be?

QUESTED: But it has to begin *somewhere* . . .

HEASLOP: If it were only my own discomfort I wouldn't mind so much, but really, I'd be undermining all the good we've tried to do in this wretched country——

QUESTED: But I think we could do *more* good the other way . . .

HEASLOP: Well, I haven't the choice. I'm too junior to dictate the manners of my fellow officials . . . or myself . . . even if I wanted to . . .

QUESTED: Even if I wanted you to?

HEASLOP: Adela, my dear, there is a lot I would do for you. But this is—I dare say I sound pompous—but *this is* a matter of principle. I can't help it if Indians don't like me . . . it's one of the hazards of the job.

The thing I've learned out here—and you will too—is that we are better for them than they are for each other. Peace, security, good administration, justice . . . we've brought them all those.

QUESTED: Everything except understanding.

HEASLOP: What good will that do them?

QUESTED: I don't know.

HEASLOP: Well, there you are.

QUESTED [*with sudden passion*]: But it's living in such isolation . . .

HEASLOP: Isolation? When we have all our English friends. When we are surrounded by India and Indians?

QUESTED: Exactly.

HEASLOP [*tolerantly*]: Oh, I know you want to *understand* India, get to *know* the people and so on, but——

QUESTED [*rather desperately*]: Somebody must!

HEASLOP: Of course,

Smiling he continues with a change of tone, wanting to get the conversation on an affectionate level. She frowns and makes a small movement repudiating his tone. He quickly reverts to a more impersonal manner.

and I've always approved of your doing good work here—as long as you don't get *involved* . . . social work, say—but please—Adela—please try not to be so emotional about it all.

QUESTED: *Emotional?* . . . Ronny, we must have a thorough talk.

HEASLOP [*trying to avoid the implications of this*]: I'm sorry. My temper's rotten in this heat. I don't mean to lecture you and order you about . . .

QUESTED: I know——

HEASLOP: But, of course, the way those Indians let you down this morning annoyed me, and things like that keep happening——

QUESTED: It's nothing to do with them that I——

HEASLOP: I dare say, but——

QUESTED: It's something very different—it's that I think . . . I think we should . . . well, consider a bit more before we get married.

A long pause.

HEASLOP [*sad but careful*]: It's all right, Adela. No need to get upset. Take all the time you want. That was the arrangement you wanted . . . that we agreed on.

QUESTED [*with a rush of gratitude*]: Oh, Ronny, I keep forgetting how nice you are—and I feel so ashamed of this—muddleheadedness. It's really not like me. I *could* explain—I need—breathing space.

HEASLOP [*uncomfortably*]: No, really, Adela. You've acted entirely within your rights. I don't want you worrying and feeling guilty. So take your time, and don't fret. It will all work out, you'll see. You'll come round in the end.

QUESTED [*in a slightly despairing voice*]: It's awful of me to have given you and your mother all this bother and still be so uncertain. [*a pause*] We've been very British over this, but I suppose that's all right.

HEASLOP [*smiling*]: Since we *are* British, I suppose it is.

QUESTED: Anyhow, we mustn't quarrel, Ronny.

HEASLOP: Oh, I couldn't quarrel with you, Adela.

QUESTED: I just need a little time——

HEASLOP: Yes, yes. By all means . . . Time . . .

QUESTED: Well—— [*she walks to the window and stands looking out at the garden*] Do you know the name of that green bird?

He comes to stand at her shoulder.

Up there, in the tree?

HEASLOP: Bee-eater?

QUESTED: Oh no, Ronny, it has red bars on its wings.

HEASLOP: Parrot?

QUESTED [*laughs*]: Good gracious no.

HEASLOP [*dejectedly*]: McBryde has an illustrated book about birds. I'll borrow it for you if you like. I'm no good at all at birds. [*a pause*] In fact, I'm useless at anything outside the job of a City Magistrate. It's a great pity.

QUESTED [*turns to him suddenly and compassionately*]: Oh, so am I, Ronny. I'm . . . useless at . . . everything. I'm really awful——

A pause while they stare at each other. Pleadingly.

HEASLOP: Adela . . .

QUESTED [*sorry for him*]: Ronny, I'd like to . . . tell you that I really will try to . . . work out the pattern of my life . . . here, with you.

HEASLOP [*making a move towards her which he quickly controls*]: My darling . . . And I really will try to be more pleasant, if that is what you want——

QUESTED: Well, at least to Dr. Aziz because he has been [*breaks off*] . . . he has been so kind to us. He has invited us to a picnic.

HEASLOP: Us?

QUESTED: Your mother, Mr. Fielding, Professor Godbole—exactly the same party.

HEASLOP: Where on earth is this picnic to be?

QUESTED: The Marabar Caves.

HEASLOP: Well, I'm blessed. Did he descend to any details?

QUESTED [*getting heated*]: If you had spoken to him, we could have arranged them.

HEASLOP *shakes his head, laughing.*

Have I said anything funny?

HEASLOP: I was only thinking how the worthy doctor's collar climbed up his neck.

QUESTED: I thought we were discussing the caves.

HEASLOP: So I am. Aziz was exquisitely dressed, from tiepin to spats, but he had forgotten his back collar-stud, and there you have the Indian in a nutshell: inattention to detail: the fundamental slackness that reveals the race. Similarly to "meet" in the caves as if they were the clock at Charing Cross when they're miles from a station and each other.

QUESTED: Have you been to them?

HEASLOP: No, but I know all about them, naturally.

QUESTED: Oh, naturally!

HEASLOP: In any case, surely Fielding would never agree to an absurd scheme like that——

QUESTED: And why not?

HEASLOP: Well, he may not be quite our sort, but he has had *some* experience in this country . . .

MRS. MOORE, FIELDING, AZIZ *and* GODBOLE *come in from the garden, sauntering along and*

talking pleasantly among themselves. HEASLOP *turns at once to* MRS. MOORE.

Mother! What is all this rubbish Adela has been telling me?

MOORE [*peaceably*]: I have no idea, my dear boy.

HEASLOP: I mean this nonsense about caves and picnics. Fielding, you are included, I hear—of course you will not allow such a fantastic scheme!

FIELDING: I don't presume to make decisions for other people, Heaslop.

HEASLOP [*looking from* MISS QUESTED *to* MRS. MOORE, *ignoring the Indians*]: If you are set on this ridiculous expedition then please allow me to arrange it. You can go under official auspices and that will be much better . . . and more comfortable too, without question.

FIELDING *stands among the English, very embarrassed. He looks imploringly at* AZIZ.

QUESTED: But Dr. Aziz has already invited us to go with him.

HEASLOP: Very kind, I'm sure. But no doubt he will understand that you will be better off in our hands.

QUESTED: But that was the whole point—we wanted to go with the Indians—we could learn something.

HEASLOP [*shouting*]: Well, I consider the whole business foolish—yes, and dangerous!

MOORE [*quietly*]: Dangerous, Ronny?

HEASLOP [*furious*]: Yes, dangerous! In fact, Mother—Adela—I forbid it! I forbid you both! Of course I cannot speak for *Mr.* Fielding.

FIELDING makes a hopeless, awkward gesture towards AZIZ. AZIZ responds with the same Muslim salaam that established a rapport between them earlier. He smiles and quickly interrupts.

AZIZ: I don't know whether you have all heard that Professor Godbole is a great authority on Indian music. Indeed, he is much admired here in the College and elsewhere. What a great pity if you did not hear him. Professor, please do us the honour.

GODBOLE: I will sing now.

HEASLOP takes an angry step forward and then stands still impatient and boiling. MRS. MOORE and MISS QUESTED turn towards GODBOLE listening politely. GODBOLE sings a brief Indian devotional song, while the English, with half their mind on their unresolved quarrel wait tensely. The SERVANTS appear on the edge of the verandah, the MAN at the waterchestnut tank stops work and straightens up. The Indians are enchanted. The English rigid and ill at ease.

FIELDING: Thanks so much. What was the song about?

MOORE: Yes, do tell us.

GODBOLE: I will explain in detail. It was a religious song. I place myself in the position of a milkmaiden. I say to Shri Krishna, "Come! Come to me only." The god refuses to come. I grow humble and say: "Do not come to me only. Multiply yourself into a hundred Krishnas, and let one go to each of my hundred companions, but one, O Lord of the Universe, come to me." He refuses to come. This is repeated several

times. The song is composed in a raga appropriate to the present hour, which is the evening.

MOORE [*gently*]: But he comes to you in some other song, I hope?

GODBOLE: Oh no, he refuses to come. I say to him, "come, come, come, come, come, come." [*pause*] He neglects to come.

QUESTED: Oh dear, that sounds so unsatisfactory!

HEASLOP [*interrupting*]: Come along, Mother, Adela. We are already late for the polo. I am sure everyone will agree that you are not committed to this Marabar expedition.

MOORE: I am committed to do nothing. Certainly not to this polo. I find I am tired and prefer to rest. Will you drop me at the bungalow first?

QUESTED: Drop me, too. I don't want to watch the polo either, I'm sure.

HEASLOP [*tired and disappointed*]: Simpler to drop the polo. Well, come along, come along. [*he walks out angrily*]

MOORE: Goodbye, Mr. Fielding, and thank you so much . . . . what lovely college grounds!

FIELDING: Goodbye, Mrs. Moore.

QUESTED: Goodbye. Such an interesting afternoon.

FIELDING: Goodbye.

MOORE: Goodbye, Dr. Aziz. We shall be seeing you soon again?

AZIZ: May I hope so?

QUESTED [*earnestly making amends*]: Oh, please, yes, Dr. Aziz. I don't know what to say . . .

AZIZ: Say nothing, Miss Quested. You'll reconsider

our picnic at the caves? I can fix the whole thing up in a jiffy. You'll see. That will be my great joy. To please you and Mr. Fielding.

QUESTED [*definitely*]: I shall look forward to it. [*she looks uneasily from* AZIZ *to the path that* HEASLOP *took when he left*] Mrs. Moore! Dr. Aziz says that he is willing to arrange the picnic—what do you say?

MOORE: I say I shall be delighted. Goodbye, goodbye.

They both nod to GODBOLE, *who makes a namaskar.* MISS QUESTED *responds to this. He follows them out to the garden, gently pointing out the way to the carriage.*

GODBOLE: Goodbye—I will accompany the ladies.

FIELDING [*sinking exhausted into a chair*]: Aziz, my dear chap. How am I to apologize to you?

AZIZ: No apologies are necessary between friends.

FIELDING: But you see, your other friends were right after all—oil and water.

AZIZ: You will never persuade me of that. "The secret understanding of the heart"—as I told you—I can't lose my faith in that for a moment's rudeness.

FIELDING: I'm glad.

AZIZ: I, too. Life is more interesting this way. I am only sorry for the embarrassment caused to your guests.

FIELDING: Oh, they'll survive—they may even have accomplished what they set out to do—learn something about India.

AZIZ: But still, it is unfortunate if your good ladies are caused distress.

FIELDING [*smiling at him affectionately*]: You know what I should do, Aziz? I should get you a drink and then jog your elbow to make you spill it.

AZIZ [*puzzled for a moment*]: I beg your pardon?

FIELDING [*sketching the gesture of a Muslim salaam and gently mimicking* AZIZ]: "The sign of a generous heart, full to overflowing, you see."

AZIZ [*laughing*]: You know, I invented that saying on the spur of the moment.

FIELDING: You know [*putting his arm on* AZIZ'*s shoulder, laughing with him*], I know you did.

They are both laughing with conspiratorial pleasure as the

CURTAIN FALLS

ACT TWO

SCENE ONE

The scene a rocky hillside in the Marabar Hills, near the first of the Marabar Caves. On one side of the Stage the opening of a cave can be partly seen. There is a small area of level ground near the centre of the stage, backed by jutting rocks. On the other side of the stage a narrow, uneven path winds upwards and off stage. On one side of the path the rocks rise sharply and with a formidable kind of beauty. On the other side of the path is indicated a sharp drop, not a precipice, exactly, but a very steep hill or gully. A few cactuses can be seen growing there, perhaps a stunted tree. When the curtain rises FOUR SERVANTS *are seen scuttling on stage. They carry baskets and a number of white cloths. Behind them come a* FEW COOLIES *carrying deck chairs, a folding table, a cotton mat, a bundle of twigs tied together to make a broom, umbrellas, etc. With a good deal of shouting and indistinguishable orders, the servants set down their baskets, help the coolies to unload, unwind their turbans, wind them up again. One takes the broom and sweeps the level patch of ground, another spreads the mat over it. Others set up the table and chairs and ingeniously tie open umbrellas to the backs to provide shade. They unpack the baskets and are setting the table with crockery and silver when* DR. AZIZ

enters, followed by MISS QUESTED, MRS. MOORE, GUIDE *and* SERVANT.

AZIZ: Here we are! We arrive at last! At last we see the famous Marabar Caves! Mrs. Moore! Miss Quested! Is this not a magnificent sight? Welcome to Marabar!

QUESTED [*staring out to the precipice*]: It looks as though we should have a wonderful view from over there.

AZIZ: Yes, yes. First-rate view! . . . come, Mrs. Moore. Tell me, was the journey comfortable?

MOORE: Oh yes!

AZIZ: Are you tired?

MOORE: Not a bit.

QUESTED: Everything was very well arranged.

They stare off stage. AZIZ *points off into the distance.*

Well, I must say I can't see why Ronny made such a fuss . . . the only danger I can see is if one has no head for heights . . . In England there'd be a railing there.

AZIZ: There is Chandrapore. Does it not look ridiculous from here? No more than a toy town.

MOORE: But it is real . . . India is the only real country . . .

AZIZ: Mrs. Moore, I knew that at heart you were an oriental . . .

QUESTED: But what do you mean, the only real . . .

AZIZ: It embraces everything, you see, Miss Quested.

MOORE: Yes, I suppose that is what I mean. India knows the troubles of the whole world . . . but offers no promises, no solutions. It jumbles everything together, the ridiculous and the august . . . like life . . .

QUESTED: Well, it certainly is an extraordinary landscape . . .

MOORE: And you and I, Adela, are used to something more orderly. Something romantic yet manageable . . . there is no comfort here . . .

AZIZ [*who has not quite followed all this*]: Comfort! Mrs. Moore you will be comfortable here, I promise you. Come and sit down in the shade and rest yourself . . .

As they return to the picnic site

Oh ladies, ladies. Put on your topis. Put on your topis, the early sun is highly dangerous for heads. I speak as a doctor of course.

QUESTED [*laughing and imitating him*]: And doctor, doctor, put on your own topi.

AZIZ [*laughing with her*]: Not for my thick head. [*he takes her hand impulsively and bangs it on his head*] You see? Solid ivory!

She pulls her hand away rather suddenly but he doesn't notice. He fusses around MRS. MOORE, *adjusting the umbrella, offering her a fan.*

QUESTED [*with a deep breath, taking a last look at the view*]: I wouldn't have missed this for anything . . . [*standing at the picnic site*] How foolish of Mr. Fielding to have missed the train! When will he get another opportunity like this?

MOORE: Never mind, he'll come on the next.

AZIZ: But I am the host. I should have brought Mr. Fielding myself . . . and now . . . Mrs. Moore, Miss Quested, our expedition is a ruin.

MOORE [*smiling*]: Mr. Fielding has no one to blame but himself. I see no ruin to our expedition.

AZIZ: Really? Explain to me!

MOORE: Now we shall all be Muslims together, as you promised.

AZIZ: Oh my dear Mrs. Moore! You are perfect... What a great compliment... There is nothing I would not do for you! I would willingly die to make you happy!

MOORE [*laughing at his extravagance*]: You make me giddy! [*more seriously*] I, too, wish for your happiness, Dr. Aziz.

AZIZ: I should never have left Mr. Fielding in the care of Professor Godbole. A philosopher you see? So unreliable! Like those Calcutta people who never picked you up as planned and...

QUESTED [*uncomfortable*]: Oh, that was a small incident... nothing really... I should never have mentioned it. But you haven't told us about your own Calcutta trip...

AZIZ: I postponed, I postponed. You see, I wanted to stay here and make foolproof arrangements for this picnic of ours.

QUESTED: Oh dear, you changed your plans... just for us.

AZIZ: No, no. For my own pleasure. I can visit my relative at any time at all. Only this morning I had a letter from him.

He pulls out his wallet and waves a letter to prove he is telling the truth and so to put them at their ease.

Poor man, he has a wife, a mother, five daughters... surrounded by women, you can see he's glad of a visit from me at any time at all.

QUESTED: All the same, I do feel guilty . . .

AZIZ: Never, never, Miss Quested! One of the greatest dreams of my life has been accomplished in having you two as my guests. I feel like the Emperor Babur.

QUESTED: Babur? Why like him?

While he speaks, the SERVANTS *set out food.*

AZIZ: Because my ancestors came down with him from Afghanistan. They joined him at Herat. He also had often no more elephants than one, none sometimes, but he never ceased showing hospitality.

QUESTED: I thought another Emperor was your favourite . . . you mentioned him at Mr. Fielding's . . . what my book calls Aurangzebe.

AZIZ: Aurangzebe, Alamgir? Oh yes, he was the more pious of the two. But Babur . . . his heart was filled with love.

QUESTED [*whispering*]: *Love.*

AZIZ: Oh yes . . . you know how he died? He laid down his life for his son. A death far more difficult than battle. They were caught in the heat, and at Agra his son fell sick. But Babur, he simply walked round the bed of his son three times saying, "I have borne it away," and he did bear it away; the fever left his son and came to him, and he died. You see, love.

MOORE: Love in the heat.

She gives a deep sigh and MISS QUESTED *looks at her sharply.*

AZIZ: But I am keeping you from your food. I thought we would just have this little bit before the caves and breakfast afterwards.

He tells the SERVANTS *to offer food. They bring plates and stand behind* MISS QUESTED *and* MRS. MOORE.

QUESTED: Isn't this breakfast?

AZIZ: This breakfast? Do you think I would treat you so strangely?

QUESTED: It is all very well arranged.

AZIZ: That you will tell me only when we return to Chandrapore. Whatever disgraces I bring upon myself, you two remain as my guests. Your first outing is in my hands.

MOORE: But not necessarily our last. You know that we are to stay on here?

QUESTED [*after a pause*]: Yes.

AZIZ: Wonderful! Marvellous! I am so elated and flattered for my country! India has charmed you after all.

QUESTED [*flatly*]: I am to be married.

AZIZ: I know! I am glad it is happily settled!

QUESTED: To Mr. Heaslop.

AZIZ [*first taken aback*]: To Mr. Heaslop? Oh! This is a surprise! Well, never mind, never mind! [*bouncing about*] What excellent news! Many, many heartiest congratulations.

He springs up to shake her hands. She receives this with a rather furtive mixture of eagerness and reluctance.

Mrs. Moore, you must be so happy.

MOORE [*impatiently*]: Yes, one has to see one's children settled. Then one is free oneself.

AZIZ: And you, Miss Quested, you are certain to be happy with any relative of Mrs. Moore.

QUESTED: Oh, my happiness . . . that's quite another problem. But, in any case, we shall stay here for some time longer. I for the major part of my life, I suppose. And Mrs. Moore, at least through the hot weather.

MOORE [*muttering*]: Love in the heat . . .

AZIZ: You will be married in Chandrapore? What an honour for our poor town.

QUESTED: No, in the hills. But in future I intend to stay in the plains. I don't believe in the hot weather.

MOORE: I believe in the hot weather, but I never thought it would bottle me up. They tell me I can't get away until after it's over.

QUESTED: I won't be bottled up. I've no patience with these wives who leave their husbands every May. Mrs. McBryde hasn't stayed in the plains once since she married; she leaves her quite intelligent husband alone half the year and then is surprised she's out of touch with him.

MOORE: She has children, you see. [*crossly*] Children are very demanding.

QUESTED: Oh yes, that's true. Children.

AZIZ: Children are the greatest joy. You must have many children.

QUESTED [*uneasily, looking away*]: I'm not sure that I want any.

AZIZ [*irrepressibly*]: Ah, children! Oh, Miss Quested [*he rushes to her*], since we are all being Muslims today, may I wish you, in the true Muslim way a hundred sons?

QUESTED: I'm . . . well I . . . Shouldn't we see the caves before the sun gets too high?

They all stand, MRS. MOORE *rather reluctantly.* THE GUIDE *appears and mutters to* AZIZ.

AZIZ: Quite right, quite right, Miss Quested. Walk ahead. Come, Mrs. Moore, the guide will lead you. The first cave is most conveniently placed just ahead of us. The guide tells me we must listen for the echo. Get inside and say something . . . anything. A word, a shout, and then listen for the remarkable echo. Walk on, walk on, I beg you.

The GUIDE *leads the way to the partly visible entrance of the first cave, then stands back to let the ladies enter. He looks to* AZIZ *for guidance as to whether he should follow.* AZIZ *waves him on. Then feeling this is not enough of a performance for their first visit to the caves, he rounds up the* SERVANTS *and* COOLIES.

Go with them! Go with them! Go with my guests. Show them some honour . . .

He chivvies the whole group into the caves and follows them in. The stage is empty for a moment, and faintly a booming echo is heard, nothing comprehensible, but faintly ominous. It is repeated and swells and becomes confused. MRS. MOORE *comes out first looking, shaken and ill. She goes directly to her chair and sits down. She fans herself and tips her head back, breathing heavily. A little later, the cave belches forth more humanity, and eventually* AZIZ *and* MISS QUESTED *come out too. She walks quickly to* MRS. MOORE.

QUESTED: Are you all right?

MOORE: . . . a bit stuffy in there . . . all those people in the dark.

QUESTED: Yes, a bit. You look pale. Do you feel ill?

MOORE [*sharply*]: No. Just a little tired, that's all. I'm not used to so much exertion so early in the day.

QUESTED: Oh, I see. Did you see when I struck the match? The reflection on the polished walls? Rather pretty, I thought.

MOORE: . . . I . . . didn't notice.

QUESTED: But Dr. Aziz says this wasn't the good cave, the best cave is around that path, there.

MOORE: I don't think I am going on to the next cave. I do feel rather tired.

QUESTED: You *aren't* well. We'll wait until after breakfast.

MOORE: But that will disappoint him so. You go on. You don't mind, do you?

QUESTED: No, of course not. He has been remarkably kind.

AZIZ [*coming up after a short colloquy with the* GUIDE]: Well, Mrs. Moore. Miss Quested. What do you think? An extraordinary sight, don't you agree? Astonishing echo going round the cave.

QUESTED: Quite fascinating.

AZIZ: Come, we will try the next. This one, the guide tells me, is the most interesting. Wonderfully polished inside, like a mirror. Come, Mrs. Moore.

MOORE: Dr. Aziz, forgive an old woman and let me stay here while you go on to the other cave. I find I am rather tired. I never was a very good walker.

AZIZ: My dear Mrs. Moore, what does it matter as long as you are my guests? Indeed I am glad you are *not* coming, which sounds strange, but it means you are treating me with true frankness, like a friend.

MOORE [*seriously*]: Yes, I am your friend . . . so may I make another suggestion? Don't have so many people with you this time. I think you'll find it . . . more convenient.

AZIZ: Exactly, exactly. As you say. Nobody to accompany Miss Quested and myself, except the guide.

AZIZ and MISS QUESTED set out along the uneven path around the spur. The GUIDE leaps ahead of them, jumping from rock to rock in a manner that MISS QUESTED clearly can't imitate.

QUESTED: Oh, my glasses!

She stops. She has forgotten her field-glasses. AZIZ notices her gesture and yells to a SERVANT to find them. While he is searching through hampers, the two stand talking.

Tell me, Dr. Aziz, do you think it silly of me to give in to Ronny . . . about being married in the hills.

AZIZ [*without much interest*]: No, no, very sensible. Much cooler in the hills.

QUESTED: You were married in the hills?

AZIZ: For Indians it is different.

QUESTED: Your wife . . . what was she like?

AZIZ [*puzzled*]: She came from a good family. [*shrugs*] A simple Muslim lady . . . a good wife . . .

QUESTED [*cautious, but compelled to ask*]: And you were . . . happily married?

AZIZ: Oh very happily married. Although this will sound strange to you, Miss Quested . . . although we had never set eyes on each other until our wedding day.

QUESTED: It was all arranged by your families?

AZIZ: Yes, in the usual way. Very happily arranged.

QUESTED: And she never left you in the hot weather.

AZIZ [*laughing reminiscently with an overtone of past happiness*]: Oh no. She never left me! I used to tease her about it sometimes. She was—[*he sketches an evocative gesture as he talks*] She wasn't exactly a Moghul princess, but she . . . well, no, she never left me.

QUESTED: How lucky. You must miss her terribly. Was she your only wife?

AZIZ [*shocked and offended*]: Oh yes, one. One, in my own particular case.

QUESTED [*she has caught his tone*]: But Muslims are allowed four, are they not?

AZIZ [*staring at her*]: Man is . . . weak——

The SERVANT *runs up with the field-glasses.* MISS QUESTED *puts the strap around her neck. She and* AZIZ *set off on the path. They disappear from sight.* MRS. MOORE *is leaning back in her deck chair, and closes her eyes. The lights dim for a few seconds to indicate the passage of time, and the booming echo is heard again.*

. . . .

When the lights go up again, MRS. MOORE *is in the same position, but the* COOLIES *and* SERVANTS *have found themselves patches of shade and are curled up asleep. A couple of the* SERVANTS *are crouching nearby, talking in low voices. They are facing away from the precipice. The sound has awakened* MRS. MOORE. *She stirs and sits up abruptly.*

MOORE [*not quite awake*]: What happened? What was that? Did something happen?

The SERVANTS *smile at her reassuringly, understanding, the tone, though not the words.*

MOORE: A dream . . . yes, a dream.

A pause, and then FIELDING *appears on the path. He is mopping his face. He is followed after a moment by* GODBOLE.

FIELDING: Well, at last. Mrs. Moore, how are you?

MOORE: So you've arrived at last, Mr. Fielding.

FIELDING: Yes. Stupid of us to miss that train.

GODBOLE [*making a namaskar to* MRS. MOORE]: It is my fault. I am to blame. I made the delay.

FIELDING: Oh, it doesn't matter, as long as we're here.

GODBOLE: Alas, I was at my prayers when Mr. Fielding so kindly came to my house. And time has no meaning when one is praying.

FIELDING: Well, never mind, never mind. Tell me, where are Miss Quested and Dr. Aziz?

MOORE: They went on to one of the further caves. I was tired. I decided to stay here and rest.

FIELDING: Probably very wise. From what I can gather, it is the view, more than the caves, that is impressive. [*a bit apprehensively*] Mrs. Moore, are you sure Miss Quested is with Dr. Aziz?

MOORE: Oh yes.

FIELDING: Then I must be mistaken. I thought I saw her clambering down the hillside as we came up the path.

MOORE [*harshly*]: Which hillside?

FIELDING: Well, I suppose it would be that one. You can see it from the place where the path curves round. . .

MOORE: Why should she be climbing down hillsides?

FIELDING: I can't imagine. Probably mistaken.

GODBOLE [*calmly*]: Not mistaken. Possibly she dropped something and went in search of it.

FIELDING: Then why not send a servant for it? [*thoughtfully*] Come to think of it, that gully is full of cactus . . . surely, she wouldn't . . .

MOORE: So it begins like this . . .

FIELDING [*urgently*]: Mrs. Moore, are you sure she was with Dr. Aziz?

MOORE [*indifferently*]: Quite sure.

GODBOLE: Pray be seated, Mr. Fielding. It is hot in the sun.

FIELDING: If it really was Miss Quested, we could probably see her from here.

He runs up to the point where the path curves round the rock and looks over the gully. He shouts back to the others.

There she is. She's reached the road below. She's just getting into a car.

AZIZ *comes down the path and almost collides with* FIELDING.

AZIZ: Fielding! My friend, you came! You joined at last. Now my day is complete.

FIELDING [*anxiously*]: But what about Miss Quested? What is she doing down there?

AZIZ [*looks over. A pause*]: But it is nothing at all. She came out of the caves, saw the car of her friend coming and decided on a ride back to town.

FIELDING: But what friend? Who picked her up?

AZIZ: How should I know? Doubtless she made some arrangement with a friend.

FIELDING: It looked like Mrs. Callendar.

AZIZ: Quite right. No doubt Mrs. Callendar came for her.

FIELDING [*partly reassured*]: It seems a very odd way to behave.

AZIZ [*gaily*]: Not a bit of it! Guests must be free to behave exactly as they wish. I should be hurt if they did otherwise.

FIELDING: Well—I just hope she wasn't ill.

AZIZ: Not a question of it. If she was ill she would have wanted me to attend her.

FIELDING [*at last reassured*]: Yes, that makes sense.

GODBOLE: Pray be seated, Mr. Fielding.

AZIZ *following him sees the field-glasses near the rock. He stoops to pick them up, looks at them puzzled, and slips them in his pocket.*

AZIZ: Professor Godbole, what a pleasure to see you! Sit down, sit down, all. We will have breakfast.

MOORE: No breakfast for me, thank you.

FIELDING: Godbole and I had breakfast at the station.

AZIZ: Professor I am glad you came, for you, a scholar, can tell Mrs. Moore all the undoubtedly interesting history of the Marabar Caves.

GODBOLE: I will tell Mrs. Moore the story of the Tank of the Dagger. Very interesting historical sight. Once there was a Hindu Raja who had slain his own sister's son. The dagger with which he performed

this deed remained stuck to his hand until in the course of years he came to the Marabar Hills.

FIELDING: Why did he come here? Is the place supposed to be sacred?

GODBOLE: No, no. He came, and here he became thirsty and wanted to drink. But he saw here a thirsty cow and ordered water to be offered to her first. Which, when done, dagger fell from hand, and to commemorate miracle he built Tank.

MOORE [*after a pause*]: I would have thought the miracle was the dagger sticking to the hand, rather than falling from it.

GODBOLE [*smiling*]: Would you like to see the tank? It is quite near here.

AZIZ: Are you rested enough, Mrs. Moore? Do not exert!

MOORE: Yes, I think a short walk before we all go back to Chandrapore.

She and GODBOLE *move in the direction of some rocks.*

GODBOLE: If you're not too tired. It's just a little way up this hill.

MOORE: No, no. I should like to go.

[*They go out.*]

FIELDING: Goodness, my dear fellow, what a trouble today has been for you!

AZIZ: No trouble, no trouble.

FIELDING: Guests not arriving on time, guests rushing away from the party. Tell me, Aziz, have you figured out what this picnic will cost you?

AZIZ: Hush, my dear chap, don't mention the subject. Hundreds and hundreds of rupees. The completed account will be too awful. My friends' servants have robbed me right and left, and as for the elephant, she apparently eats nothing but gold.

FIELDING: Monstrous!

AZIZ: I am delighted, really. They have made my guests comfortable. If money goes, money comes. If money stays, death comes. Have you heard that proverb before? You couldn't, for I have just now invented it.

FIELDING: Have you heard my proverbs? A penny saved is a penny earned; a stitch in time saves nine; look before you leap. And the whole British Empire rests on them. You will never kick us out, you know, until you make prudence a virtue here.

AZIZ: Kick you out? Why should I worry about it? Leave it to the politicians . . . No, when I was a student I used to get excited over your damned countrymen, certainly; but now I think if I can be friends with one Englishman it is more important than being enemies with an entire nation. I don't really ask for more.

FIELDING: As a friend, then—now don't be offended, Aziz—but as a friend, may I offer to share the expenses of this picnic with you?

AZIZ [*very touched*]: No, no, my dear Fielding. The gesture is enough—the act would be too much.

Pause. AZIZ *takes a cheap little cardboard folder from his pocket and hands it to* FIELDING.

Open it.

FIELDING [*opens it and pulls out a photograph*]: Who is it?

AZIZ: She was my wife. You are the first Englishman she has ever come before. Now put her photograph away.

FIELDING [*too dazed to do so*]: I don't think I have ever been so deeply complimented and I can't imagine why——

AZIZ: It's nothing. She was not a highly educated lady. She was not even beautiful. She was my wife. Put her away. She is dead. She is of no importance. I showed her to you because I have nothing else to show.

FIELDING *returns the photograph.*

Miss Quested was asking about my marriage just now and that is why she is so much on my mind.

FIELDING: Miss Quested, all facts and curiosity. She wants to know *about* India, not really to know India.

AZIZ: Yes, I'm glad you're not going to marry her.

FIELDING: I? Marry her? What on earth put that extraordinary idea into your head?

AZIZ: I don't know—something you said—and I wished marriage and children for you.

FIELDING: Good Lord! Not with her, she's going to marry Heaslop.

AZIZ: Yes, I'm glad it's not with her for she is not even beautiful. She has practically no breasts if you come to think of it. For the City Magistrate they shall be sufficient perhaps, but for you I shall arrange... [*he is back to his old grandiloquent style*] I shall arrange a lady with breasts like...

FIELDING: I know, like pomegranates... [*laughing*]

AZIZ [*also laughing*]: I was going to say mangoes...

FIELDING: In any case, you'll do no such thing.

AZIZ: Not really. Only a gesture to match your gesture . . .

He sketches the gesture of a Muslim salaam as he did in the first act and FIELDING *responds as before. During this speech* MRS. MOORE *and* GODBOLE *return slowly to the picnic site.* FIELDING *sees them and is again nagged with worry.*

FIELDING: You know, I still can't help feeling that something went wrong here . . . it seems such an extraordinary way for a girl like Miss Quested to behave.

AZIZ [*springing up*]: Mrs. Moore, I appeal to you . . . did anything go wrong with my arrangements? Are you dissatisfied with me?

MOORE: On the contrary, your arrangements were perfect. Nothing went wrong.

AZIZ: You see, Fielding? You see?

FIELDING: But something must have happened . . .

MOORE [*crossly*]: Forgive me, Dr. Aziz, I know I am being a very awkward guest, but unless you particularly want to stay longer, could we not go back to Chandrapore?

AZIZ: Of course, of course, anything you wish. We have seen all, we have had our little excursion. Now back to our homes and rest, rest, rest!

He starts to chivvy the SERVANTS *again. They jump up and bustle about folding chairs and clearing up. He mutters more orders.* GODBOLE *goes out.*

FIELDING [*thoughtfully*]: So nothing happened . . .

MOORE [*very sharply*]: Of course something happened, Mr. Fielding.

FIELDING: Did it? Then . . .

MOORE [*impatient*]: But it is too late now. She has started the machine; it must run to its end. The machine [*she taps her head*] to kill love.

She goes out. The SERVANTS *are still flapping about.*

AZIZ [*to* FIELDING, *smiling*]: Come, my dear Fielding. You have seen Marabar at last. That is something.

FIELDING: Aziz . . . I'm really worried . . .

AZIZ: Leave the worrying to me, my dear fellow.

FIELDING: But did you hear what Mrs. Moore said?

AZIZ: She is old . . . and tired. Probably she will soon forget this day. [*joyfully*] But I—I shall remember this day forever. Come.

They leave together as the

CURTAIN FALLS

ACT TWO

SCENE TWO

The scene is the English Club of Chandrapore. It is late afternoon of the day of the picnic at the Marabar Caves. The Club smoking-room has been arranged for a meeting, a table on one side to serve as an informal podium, rows of rattan chairs facing the table. The tall shuttered doors of the smoking-room open on to a verandah, and beyond the verandah railing, in the blue distance, the irregular, implacable outline of the Marabar Hills can be seen. On one side swing doors lead into the Club bar. On the other, closed doors shut off the lounge. When the Curtain goes up there is a certain amount of indistinct talk from the bar where the men are having drinks and discussing in serious voices the affair at the caves. At intervals one or another of the men leans through the bar door to see that the women are all right, to murmur a reassuring word or two, to see whether Mr. Turton, the Collector (Chief Administrative Officer for the district), has arrived. Sitting in the smoking-room, with anxious important looks on their faces, are the various wives. MRS. TURTON *is, of course, the centre of the group and when one of the men looks at her enquiringly to get news of Mr. Turton's whereabouts and plans, she shakes her head soberly. All the ladies, one by one, look up significantly at the closed lounge*

doors with impatient and worried expressions. It is clear from their behaviour that something alarming is going on behind those doors.

There is a sudden clatter of temple bells and drums that makes the ladies sit up nervously, alert and apprehensive. One of the men from the bar puts his head out to reassure them. He is a Lieutenant in the khaki tropical uniform of an Indian Army Regiment.

MRS. TURTON: Well, Mrs. Collin, we must come to some decision about the price of these tickets. I suggest three rows at ten rupees . . .

MRS. MCBRYDE: Don't you realize that you're wasting your time with this sort of thing when there's likely to be a riot?

MRS. TURTON: This is not the time for hysterical outbursts. The best thing we can do is to get on with our own work.

MRS. LESLEY: Mrs. Turton, how can you worry about such things, when that poor girl is lying in there . . .

MRS. TURTON: Mrs. Lesley, there is nothing we can do.

MRS. LESLEY: But after that terrifying attack in a cave . . . .

MRS. TURTON: Mr. McBryde and Mr. Heaslop are in there with her now. Now, Mrs. Collin, to continue. . .

LIEUTENANT *enters.*

LIEUTENANT: No cause for alarm, ladies. We have people posted in the city . . .

MRS. MCBRYDE: But what is it? Is it a demonstration?

LIEUTENANT: No, no. Just preparations for some festival.

MRS. MCBRYDE: The story is bound to be all over the bazaars by now.

LIEUTENANT: Nothing to worry about. We are very well protected, I assure you. [*He returns to the bar*].

MRS. TURTON: I'm sure the lieutenant is right. We will only aggravate things by seeming anxious . . . It seems unkind to say it now but I knew it would end badly. All these foolish attempts to *see* India . . .

MRS. BURTON: But who could know it would end as badly as this?

MRS. LESLEY: The whole idea of a picnic at Marabar . . . no one but a novice would think of such a thing—I mean with *Indians*!

MRS. MCBRYDE [*in a high, tense voice*]: That's just what I mean . . . the Indians. How can we stay calm when we never know which of them . . .

MRS. TURTON: Please . . .

MRS. MCBRYDE: I can't help it. I have children . . .

MRS. LESLEY [*with an air of stating a self-evident truth*]: I always think the children should be educated at home. I mean, what with the climate . . .

MRS. MCBRYDE [*with rising resentment*]: People are always saying things like that—but what about *us*? Are *we* always to have only half a life—*always* separated from either husband or children?

MRS. TURTON [*almost off-hand*]: One of the penalties of responsibility. It has its compensations too.

MRS. MCBRYDE [*angrily*]: But I tell you——

MRS. TURTON: Mrs. McBryde, I can't allow this. From you of all people. Your husband's here now in charge. We look to him to protect us, and you must . . .

MRS. MCBRYDE: Protect you with what? Native policemen? Native troops? It's ridiculous . . .

MRS. TURTON [*very emphatically*]: This . . . must . . . stop! Now, control yourself. We mustn't jump to conclusions. It is just possible there may be some other explanation.

MRS. COLLIN: You're quite right, Mrs. Turton. When you've been here as long as I have . . .

MRS. MCBRYDE: What are the other possible explanations? . . .

MRS. LESLEY: The poor girl may be dying . . .

MRS. TURTON: The doctor is with her now, we won't improve things by arguing like this.

The other ladies are openly sceptical and murmur things like " You're too charitable, Mrs. Turton," and " Well, I suppose we must *keep open minds . . ."*

MRS. MCBRYDE: I'm not going to put up with it . . . I'm not! I'm going to leave.

MRS. BURTON: Leave India?

MRS. MCBRYDE: I'll make my husband resign, and yes, we'll leave India and return . . .

MRS. BURTON: To what?

MRS. MCBRYDE: To what? To England, of course.

They all know this is impossible since none of them could maintain their colonial living standards in England.

MRS. BURTON: Things aren't the same for us . . . things aren't so easy in England . . .

MRS. MCBRYDE: But at least . . . Well, we can ask for a transfer, that would be something . . .

Behind her back the ladies exchange looks, and then continue in silence their small occupations . . . one knits, another flips through the pages of an old copy of the "Illustrated London News," and so on. HEASLOP *comes in from the lounge and the ladies are all alert again, watching him.*

HEASLOP: Callendar has given her a light sedative . . . She's in a bad . . . a very bad way . . .

MRS. TURTON: Will she talk to him?

HEASLOP: Oh, she talks. She talks all the time . . . too much . . .

MRS. BURTON: You mean, she's, well . . . she's *raving*?

MRS. COLLIN: More likely delirious.

HEASLOP: Well, the sedative should calm her a bit. She has a high temperature. And Callendar is worried about the cactus thorns . . .

MRS. TURTON: *Cactus* . . . oh, the poor creature . . .

HEASLOP: In case they infect . . . Anyway she is ready to make a statement now. I mean an official police statement.

MRS. BURTON: Then she's . . .

MRS. MCBRYDE: Then it really is . . .

HEASLOP: Yes, it really is just as bad as we feared.

FLETCHER *comes in.*

FLETCHER: The Collector Sahib just phoned to say he's on his way up. Arrangements seem to be pretty complete in the city. Would you tell Callendar and McBryde please.

HEASLOP: Thank you, Mr. Fletcher.

FLETCHER *looks searchingly at* HEASLOP, *then ducks into the bar and* RONNY *returns to the lounge.*

MRS. MCBRYDE [*in a low fierce voice*]: I knew it... I told you...

MRS. TURTON: Well, we've all known it really. Why else would our husbands have started on security arrangements immediately. But these things have to be confirmed. After all, we do not have a reputation for fairness for nothing.

MRS. BURTON: I entirely agree, Mrs. Turton. But now we know for sure.

MRS. MCBRYDE: I knew for sure all the time... I did! That.. that monster...

MRS. LESLEY: Really!

MRS. TURTON: Well, he'll be punished, make no mistake.

MRS. MCBRYDE: Punished after the damage is done...

MRS. BURTON: He could hardly be punished *before*...

MRS. TURTON [*severely*]: The situation should never have arisen. Never. But the poor girl... in spite of her foolishness...

A certain bustle outside announces the arrival of MRS. MOORE *and* FIELDING. *She is uninterested, even expressionless. He is puzzled, anxious, energetic. The ladies surround* MRS. MOORE *at the verandah door, and* MRS. TURTON *makes a point of shaking hands with her.*

ALL: Oh, Mrs. Moore.

MRS. TURTON: Thank God you got here safely, Mrs. Moore. What a terrible day!

A WIFE: Mrs. Moore, are you all right? Do come in——

FIELDING: What *is* all this about? Ladies... please? We are mystified...

MRS. TURTON [*nastily*]: We thought *you* would be able to tell *us*, Mr. Fielding.

FIELDING: Tell you what? Is there to be a meeting here? We were instructed most urgently to come directly here from the station.

MRS. TURTON [*ominously*]: Indeed there is to be a meeting.

FIELDING: But what has happened? We have been at the Marabar Caves all day and know nothing.

MRS. COLLIN: Exactly, Mr. Fielding.

MRS. TURTON: You have been on the very spot and were helpless to prevent this horrible thing. What has happened indeed!

FIELDING: A riot? Disturbance of some kind? There seemed to be a lot of police on the road, but I assumed that was because of the Mohorrum celebrations.

MRS. TURTON: You, of course, know the names of all these native festivals.

MRS. MOORE: I dare say it is about Adela.

FIELDING: Adela? Miss Quested?

MRS. MOORE: She has been unwell lately.

MRS. TURTON: You see, Mr. Fielding, Mrs. Moore appears to know all about it. It is strange that you should pretend ignorance.

FIELDING: Unwell? Sick? Since when? [*ignoring* MRS. TURTON].

MRS. MOORE: Oh, a few days . . . anyway since before this excursion to the caves.

MRS. TURTON [*startled*]: Since before . . .

FIELDING: Didn't we decide she was all right . . .

MRS. MOORE [*impatiently*]: Not physical illness.

FIELDING: I'm not sure that I understand.

MRS. MOORE [*in exasperation*]: I suppose, since you insist, one must call it a spiritual illness.

FIELDING: Mrs. Moore, you trouble me very much.

MRS. MOORE: Oh, trouble, trouble! Muddles and mysteries! Let me pass, Mr. Fielding. I'm tired and I wish to sit down.

She finds a chair separated from the rest and remains there for the rest of the act, a disapproving, compelling figure. She says very little, but nobody can ignore her or her occasional movements of irritation or weariness.

LADIES: Poor creature...
I think she's a little unhinged...
After today, who could wonder?

MAJOR CALLENDAR *enters from the lounge. He looks crumpled and hot, but retains his bluff manner.*

CALLENDAR: Well, ladies...

MRS. TURTON [*calling out to the men in the bar*]: Major Callendar has come out.

They come out of the bar with drinks in their hands. The LIEUTENANT, MR. BURTON, *a* CIVIL SERVANT, *a* FEW JUNIORS *from the various civil departments.*

MEN: Well, Doctor Sahib?
How is she? Is she all right?
Good to see you, Callendar...
Let's hope you can set our minds at rest...

BURTON: Squat down, Callendar, and tell us all about it.

CALLENDAR: Take me some time to do that.

BURTON: Have a drink. [*he gets it*] Is she worse? She was in a terrible state when she arrived.

CALLENDAR [*accepting a drink*]: Not worse. She is by no means out of danger.

MRS. TURTON: Any one of us would be glad to sit with her . . . or anything . . .

CALLENDAR: Most generous of you, Mrs. Turton, but it isn't necessary. My wife will stay with her . . . she's had experience. [*there is a short difficult pause*] I've never had such a case in all my life . . . and had never hoped to, particularly here, in India. [*he shakes his head*] Fever, of course. Only to be expected. And the cactus thorns. Those will have to be removed under a magnifying glass. One by one. They are all over her. [*he takes a long drink*] But what am I to do about the rest of it? Her mind . . . the disturbance in her mind. And the terrors . . . it's more than . . . well, we'll just have to wait and see. [*he shrugs and then turns hopefully to* MRS. MOORE] Mrs. Moore, perhaps you can help me. Miss Quested complains of what she calls " an echo". Inside her head, she says. As though her head were a cave. An echo.

MRS. MOORE [*indifferently*]: Yes. There was one.

CALLENDAR [*gently*]: Was it something to do with the cave?

MRS. MOORE: Oh yes. But there was nothing distinctive about the echo in the cave.

CALLENDAR: I'm sorry to press this, but if you could help me . . . explain it to me a bit, I might be able to do something for her.

MRS. MOORE [*in a monotone*]: "Boum"—or something like that. Whatever is said, the same monotonous noise replies. "Boum" is the sound as far as I can express it, or "bou-oum," or "ou-boum"... utterly dull. Hope, politeness, the blowing of a nose, the squeak of a boot, all produce "Boum".

Baffled silence while they all exchange looks and someone taps his head suggestively.

CALLENDAR [*stands up restlessly*]: I can't help blaming myself... I wish I hadn't given my *jewel* of an assistant leave... It would never have happened...

FLETCHER: Rubbish—you couldn't have been expected to foresee.

FIELDING: Assistant? Do you mean Aziz?

MEN: No one blames you, Callendar.

We are all to blame. [*they look meaningly at* FIELDING]

We assumed that as long as there was an Englishman along with the party...

FIELDING [*pushing forward*]: But what about Dr. Aziz? How is he involved?

CALLENDAR [*shocked*]: Fielding, can you seriously insist that you don't know?

FIELDING [*patiently*]: We were brought straight here from the station when we returned from the picnic. We have since learned that Miss Quested is ill. Dr. Aziz was taken off somewhere at the same time. That is all I know.

CALLENDAR: Somewhere! To the police station... where he belongs. The Collector was kind enough to save you from the disgrace of being seen with him...

FIELDING: I am grateful to Mr. Turton, for his kindness. But what has Aziz done?

TURTON *enters and stands in the door unseen by the others.*

CALLENDAR [*slowly and with distaste*]: Miss Quested was attacked and insulted in one of the Marabar Caves.

FIELDING: What?

CALLENDAR: She escaped, by God's grace.

FIELDING: Oh no . . . not Aziz . . . it couldn't be Aziz . . .

CALLENDAR *nods.* FIELDING *pulls himself together.*

Who brings this . . . this wicked charge?

CALLENDAR: My wife, and the unfortunate girl herself.

FIELDING: Miss Quested? Miss Quested, *herself* definitely accuses him . . .

CALLENDAR [*coldly*]: Yes.

FIELDING: . . . of attempted rape?

CALLENDAR: Yes.

FIELDING [*violently*]: Then she's mad.

MR. TURTON, *the Collector, has stood in the verandah door listening, now moves forward, rigid with fury. The others deferentially make way for him, and group themselves like students listening to a respected teacher.*

TURTON: I cannot pass that remark. As Collector of this district I must ask you to withdraw it instantly. It is the type of remark you have permitted yourself to make ever since you came to Chandrapore.

FIELDING: I am excessively sorry, sir; I certainly withdraw it unconditionally.

TURTON: Mr. Fielding, what induced you to speak in such a tone.

FIELDING: The news gave me a very great shock, so I must ask you to forgive me. I cannot believe that Dr. Aziz is guilty.

TURTON [*slams his hand on the table*]: That . . . this is a repetition of your insult in an aggravated form.

FIELDING: If I may venture to say so, no. I make no reflection on the good faith of the two ladies, but the charge they are bringing against Aziz rests upon some mistake, and five minutes will clear it up.

TURTON [*biting and vindictive*]: It does indeed rest upon a mistake. It does indeed. I have had twenty-five years' experience of this country. And during that time I have never known anything but disaster result when English people and Indians attempt to be intimate socially. We must meet them, yes. Courtesy, by all means. Intimacy . . . never. The whole weight of my experience is against it. You, Mr. Fielding, with your "liberal" ideas, you want peace and sound administration, a comfortable life and time to get on with your work . . . believe me, *we* are the ones that make that possible for you. And gladly. But you demand more. You demand that everyone be treated on equal terms . . . in an instant you see what happens. The work of years is undone and the good name of my District, which means a great deal to me, is ruined for a generation.

FIELDING: I ask only that one man . . . one Indian be considered a human being.

TURTON: And I am talking of a large community. Mr. Fielding. Both—Britons and Indians. Perhaps you can see the end of this day's work. I only wish that I had never lived to see its beginning. That a young lady—engaged to my most valued subordinate . . . that an English girl fresh from home . . . that she should have been led . . . by . . .

His accusation of Fielding is obvious, and so are the signs of his sincere distress. The club members register a kind of approval of both. After a moment he straightens up, looks around at them all, and continues his speech to FIELDING *in a more controlled voice.*

Well, once again, it is left to us to clear up the mess when newcomers set our traditions aside.

FIELDING: We all know that you are referring to me, sir . . .

TURTON: Mr. Fielding, did it not occur to you to wonder why Miss Quested did not return with the rest of your party on the train?

FIELDING: But I thought I knew why. I saw her leave . . . [*turning helplessly to the others*] As you probably know, Professor Godbole and I were delayed and missed the early train . . .

BURTON [*meaningly*]: Delayed?

FIELDING: I was to pick Godbole up on my way to the station. When I got to his house he was saying his prayers and could not be disturbed.

Someone laughs. Someone says, " Oh, it's called a delay *now, is it?" Someone else says, " Prayers! We all know those prayers!"*

FLETCHER: Look, Fielding, we have reason to believe that Godbole was bribed.

FIELDING: Bribed by Aziz? What on earth for?

FLETCHER: To hold you up—delay you, if you prefer. It was all premeditated, you see.

FIELDING: I don't see. I only know that when Godbole and I got there I saw her from the top of the hill. A car had stopped there and I saw someone—a woman—get out and help her in. I thought that Miss Quested had seen the chance of a lift back to Chandrapore and had very sensibly taken it instead of the hot train ride. Perhaps she recognized the car and hailed it.

Silence.

It's possible. [*getting a bit desperate*] Callendar—I couldn't really tell from the distance, but it looked as though it might be your wife? She could confirm it?

CALLENDAR: It was my wife all right. And we can all count ourselves extremely fortunate that she happened to be passing Marabar at just that moment. She drove the poor girl straight back here.

MRS. TURTON: Yes. Thank God she was passing. I cannot think of what might have happened otherwise.

FIELDING [*seeing no help from them*]: Mrs. Moore. You were there. What happened? Was Miss Quested in a hurry to get home—and grabbed at this unexpected opportunity?

MRS. MOORE: Adela? She's never been in a hurry in her life.

FIELDING: If she wasn't feeling well, and didn't want to bother the rest of the party? A touch of the sun, perhaps?

MOORE [*vaguely*]: I wasn't feeling very well myself.

FIELDING: So it could have been the sun?

MOORE: Not the sun. I went into the first cave with them. It seemed as if a lot of people crushed in after us . . . the closeness of those people . . . and the crush . . . and the smell . . . and, of course the echo . . . I was suffocated. I didn't go to the next cave with them. I wasn't feeling very well.

CALLENDAR: Well, there you are, Fielding. He bribed Godbole to delay, and he must have bribed the servants and guides to stifle Mrs. Moore. What more do you want? It's perfectly clear . . .

MOORE: It was the echo . . .

CALLENDAR: I call it very neatly planned. Mrs. Moore out of commission. Aziz is free to go on with the girl to the next cave. Alone. And then . . . well, better give up trying to find excuses, Fielding.

FIELDING *turns away defeated.*

TURTON: That's enough now. I think we have made the position clear to Mr. Fielding.

Enter MCBRYDE *who stands beside* TURTON.

CALLENDAR: Ah, McBryde—How is she?

TURTON: Ah, McBryde, that was very quick. Now we have some first hand official information?

MCBRYDE: Yes sir, we have more than information. We have evidence. I wish I could feel some satisfaction about it all.

TURTON: We are all shocked and distressed, McBryde. But if you have evidence, then that is at least something concrete on which to base our actions.

MCBRYDE: Yes sir. It's concrete all right. I'm afraid the case will definitely have to come to trial now. There seems no doubt about it. [*producing some notes*] Well, sir, I have taken down the poor girl's initial charge signed and witnessed. [*he shows the papers to* TURTON] I couldn't worry her overmuch with questions. She's in no state . . . and besides, she'll have plenty to go through in the witness-box.

FIELDING: Wasn't there a guide with her? Aziz said there would be guides . . .

MCBRYDE: Guide? No. She had got among some cactuses. Mrs. Callendar saved her life coming just then . . . the girl was beginning to fling herself about. Mrs. Callendar helped her down to the car. Miss Quested couldn't stand the native driver and kept saying "Keep him away" . . . and it was that that put Mrs. Callendar on the track of what had happened. That's the story so far as I know it. Perhaps later Miss Quested will be able to tell us more, but certainly not just now. There was an echo that appears to have frightened her.

FIELDING: Exactly. The echo . . . couldn't that have been . . .?

MRS. TURTON: But Mrs. Moore tells us that it wasn't a frightening echo. Just a sort of "boum".

MRS. MOORE: You are wrong. It was both frightening and disagreeable. Worse than the crush of people and the smells and the suffocation. It undermined one's hold on life. It said, " Pathos, piety, courage . . . they exist, but are identical, and so is filth. Everything exists, nothing has value". If one had spoken vileness in that place or quoted poetry, the comment would have been the same— " ou-boum". If one had spoken with the tongues of angels and pleaded for all the unhappiness and misunderstanding in the world, past, present and to come, for all the misery men must undergo whatever their opinion and position, and however much they dodge or bluff . . . it would amount to the same.

Another bewildered silence.

FIELDING: So there is still room for error. Is it possible that this echo affected Miss Quested's nerves? That she has confused events in her own mind?

MCBRYDE [*sadly*]: Oh no. She is very clear about that. It was when she went to the second cave. The charge is that he followed her into the cave and made insulting advances. She hit at him with her field-glasses; he pulled at them and the strap broke, and that is how she got away.

FIELDING: No, no. There must . . .

MCBRYDE: When we searched him at the Police Station, they were in his pocket.

FIELDING: Oh no, oh no, no; it'll be cleared up in five minutes . . .

MCBRYDE [*placing them on the table, unemotionally*]: Have a look at them. The strap has been newly broken. The

eye-piece is jammed . . . What does the logic of evidence say?

FIELDING *shakes his head.*

MCBRYDE: We have further evidence of his character and his state of mind. [*he puts* AZIZ's *wallet on the table*] Look at this, for instance. We took it from him at the same time. I have been going through the contents. They are not edifying. Here is a letter from a friend who keeps a brothel in Calcutta!

FIELDING [*sickened*]: . . . his private letters . . .

MCBRYDE: It'll have to be quoted in court as bearing on his morals. He was arranging to visit this man and see women. It's clear what thoughts filled his head. And we found more evidence on him, too. Look at this. You see, photographs of women.

FIELDING [*examines photograph*]: That's his wife.

TURTON: How do you know that?

FIELDING: He told me. It was a great compliment for a Muslim to show me the picture of his wife.

CALLENDAR: Wife, indeed! We all know those wives.

TURTON: Well, whatever our thoughts may be, there is certainly no question that McBryde has produced all the relevant evidence necessary for this case. We all know how quickly gossip spreads in the bazaar, and how fast things become exaggerated. Consequently it is our job to keep from panic and alarmism which is as dangerous for us as it is for the entire city. Certainly we may expect tense days ahead, but we must keep cool. No matter what happens. No inflammatory talk. No open anxiety. Keep cool. Don't go out more than

you can help. Don't go into the city. Don't talk before your servants. Meanwhile I'd prefer if you would all remain here until I have had a talk with Heaslop. Right? My dear . . .

TURTON *goes out. The meeting breaks up and people separate into groups, some return to the bar, some to the verandah. Only* MRS. MOORE *remains sitting exactly as before.* FIELDING *stops* MCBRYDE *as he is leaving.*

FIELDING: McBryde, forgive me a moment. May I have a word with you? I suppose there is no possibility of my seeing Miss Quested?

MCBRYDE: I hardly think that would do. Surely.

FIELDING: I was afraid you'd say that. I should very much like to.

MCBRYDE: She is in no state to see anyone. Besides, you don't know her well.

FIELDING: Hardly at all . . . But you see I believe that that wretched boy is innocent and she's under some hideous delusion.

MCBRYDE: I had no idea that *that* could be in your mind.

FIELDING: Those field-glasses upset me for a moment, but I've thought since; it's impossible that, having attempted to assault her, he would put her glasses into his pocket.

MCBRYDE: Quite possible, I'm afraid. When an Indian goes bad he goes not only very bad but very odd.

FIELDING: I don't follow you.

The two sit down.

MCBRYDE: How should you? When you think of crime you think of English crime. The psychology here is different. I dare say you'll tell me next that he was quite normal when he came down the hill to greet you . . . Which must have been immediately after the attack.

FIELDING: He was. And he was normal and cheerful and hospitable all the rest of the day too.

MCBRYDE: No reason why he shouldn't be. I've seen it again and again. Read any of the Mutiny records.

FIELDING: However that may be, I do want to see Miss Quested.

MCBRYDE: You haven't explained to me what's in your mind. Why on earth do you want to see her?

FIELDING: I only wanted to ask her whether she is certain, dead certain, that it was Aziz who followed her into the cave.

MCBRYDE: Possibly I might ask her that much.

FIELDING: But *I* wanted to ask her. I wanted someone who believes in him to ask her.

MCBRYDE: What difference does that make?

FIELDING: She is among people who disbelieve in Indians.

MCBRYDE: She tells her own story, doesn't she?

FIELDING: I know, but she tells it to *you*.

MCBRYDE: Well, whatever your finespun theories may be, you can't see her.

FIELDING [*angrily*]: I can see your prisoner, I suppose?

MCBRYDE: His own people seem in touch with him all right. Why should you mix yourself up with pitch?

FIELDING: But if he's innocent . . .

MCBRYDE: Innocent or guilty, why mix yourself up? What's the good?

FIELDING: Oh good, good! I feel suffocated.

MCBRYDE: Look, Fielding, the situation is going to be very nasty in Chandrapore and we shall all have to hang together I'm afraid. At a time like this there's no room for . . . well . . . personal views. The man who doesn't toe the line is lost.

FIELDING [*bitterly*]: I can see that.

MCBRYDE: But you don't see entirely. He not only loses himself, he weakens his friends. If you leave the line, you leave a gap in the line. These jackals who call themselves his lawyers are looking with all their eyes for a gap. Besides, the results could be very serious for you . . . for your career.

FIELDING: Can I see Aziz?

MCBRYDE: No. You may see him on a magistrate's order, but on my own responsibility I don't feel justified. It might lead to more complications.

FIELDING [*icily*]: To whom do I apply for an order?

MCBRYDE: City Magistrate.

FIELDING: Heaslop! That sounds very comfortable!

MCBRYDE: Yes, one can't very well worry poor Heaslop.

Through the last few speeches there has been a good deal of quiet movement and whispering that spreads from the verandah to the bar. People start returning to the smoking-room. The groups that stayed in the room sit up alertly. HEASLOP *enters. Everyone except* FIELDING *stands up.*

HEASLOP: Oh please—please everyone sit down. I only wanted to hear what has been decided.

TURTON [*his hand on* HEASLOP'*s shoulder*]: Heaslop, I was telling them earlier that I'm against any show of force. I'm afraid it would prove only an invitation to more trouble, even violence and rebelliousness. [*apologetically*] When the verdict is obtained, it will be another matter.

HEASLOP: You are sure to know best; I have no experience . . .

MRS. TURTON: How is Miss Quested, may we ask?

HEASLOP: Quieter, thank you. I wish everyone would sit down.

CALLENDAR: Some have never got up.

They all stare at FIELDING. FIELDING *remains seated.*

TURTON: Mr. Fielding, what has prevented you from standing up?

FIELDING: May I make a statement, sir?

TURTON: Certainly.

FIELDING: I believe Dr. Aziz to be innocent.

TURTON: You have a right to hold that opinion if you choose, but is that any reason why you should insult Mr. Heaslop?

FIELDING: May I conclude my statement?

TURTON: Certainly.

FIELDING: I am waiting for the verdict of the courts. If he is guilty I resign from my service and leave India. I resign from the Club now.

TURTON: You have not answered my question. Why did you not stand when Mr. Heaslop entered?

FIELDING [*moving towards the door*]: With all deference, sir, I am not here to answer questions, but to make a personal statement, and I have concluded it.

TURTON [*furious*]: May I ask whether you have taken over charge of this District? [*as* FIELDING *reaches the door and finds the* LIEUTENANT *blocking the way*] One moment, Mr. Fielding, you are not to go yet, please. Before you leave the Club from which you do very well to resign, you will express some detestation of the crime, and you will apologize to Mr. Heaslop.

FIELDING: I shall wait to hear whether, in fact, there was a crime before I decide whether I should apologize to all of you or to Dr. Aziz.

TURTON [*losing control*]: Leave this room at once! I deeply regret that I demeaned myself to have you met at the station. You have sunk to the level of your associates, that is what is wrong with you! Leave this room at once . . .

FIELDING: I cannot while this gentleman prevents me.

HEASLOP [*almost in tears*]: Let him go! For God's sake, let him go!

The LIEUTENANT *moves away from the door and* FIELDING *exits.*

TURTON [*a pause while he pats* HEASLOP *on the back*]: My dear Heaslop, I'm sure I needn't tell you . . . how appalled at Fielding's behaviour . . .

HEASLOP [*turning away*]: It doesn't matter . . .

TURTON: Well, all I can tell you is that you will have a chance to even the score in court.

HEASLOP [*harshly*]: . . . this will have to come to trial? There is no possibility of . . .

TURTON: Of their wriggling out of it? Certainly not. Set your mind at rest, my dear Heaslop. Of course there will be a trial.

HEASLOP: . . . I didn't mean that . . .

TURTON: And remember that we'll all be behind you . . .

HEASLOP [*more calmly*]: Collector Sahib, I've been thinking . . .

TURTON [*reassuringly*]: Perhaps I shouldn't be saying this, but of course we all know what the verdict will . . . well, let me leave it at this; we will back you every step of the way and when you speak from the magistrate's bench, you will be speaking for all of us.

HEASLOP: But that's just it, sir . . . I don't think we should decide beforehand . . . I mean . . . [*he swallows hard and straightens up*] What I mean is, I don't think I should try this case.

TURTON: We all understand your feelings, my boy, but they mustn't stand in your way at a time like this.

HEASLOP [*with difficulty, embarrassed at seeming* "*noble*"]: Oh it's not my feelings so much . . . it's well, I don't think it would be fair . . . I mean, not really *just* . . .

MRS. TURTON [*in a high incredulous voice*]: Not try the case?

HEASLOP: I mean, I'm an interested party . . . don't you see?

BURTON: But if you don't who will . . .?

TURTON [*seriously*]: Burton is right, Heaslop. What is the alternative?

HEASLOP [*quietly*]: I'll have to hand it over to my deputy.

MRS. MCBRYDE [*hysterically*]: Your deputy! An *Indian!* You'd allow an *Indian* . . .

TURTON: Please, Mrs. McBryde . . .

HEASLOP: Yes, I'm afraid so. I'll have to ask Das to take over.

CALLENDAR: Heaslop, are you serious?

HEASLOP: I was never more serious in my life. Das is a . . . is a good man. I've been training him for some time. He's sound, and . . . and loyal . . .

MRS. MCBRYDE: None of them are loyal!

CALLENDAR: You realize what's going to happen?

FLETCHER: There could be bloodshed!

MRS. COLLIN: Your own mother may be involved.

HEASLOP: I'm sorry . . .

TURTON [*severely*]: Heaslop, I must ask you to reconsider.

HEASLOP: I'm afraid I really can't reconsider this decision, sir. I couldn't . . . [*firmly*] Well, I couldn't continue with my job here if I did. It's . . . well, justice, you see . . .

MRS. MCBRYDE: Justice from an *Indian*?

HEASLOP [*unemphatically*]: From *us*, Mrs. McBryde.

TURTON: We won't try and persuade you further, Heaslop. We're all disturbed.

HEASLOP: Thank you, Collector Sahib. I agree, that's best.

TURTON: Yes, you think it over. Discuss it with your mother if you like and come and let me know your final decision.

TURTON *turns to leave the room. The rest of the group breaks up, too, some for the verandah, some for the bar, a couple stand talking quietly at the door.*

HEASLOP [*walking towards his mother.* MRS. MOORE *pays no attention to him*]: Mother, you do understand, don't you? Mother, I'm sorry. [*pause*] Adela was asking for you. Will you see her?

MRS. MOORE: I would prefer not.

HEASLOP: I know it's difficult for you, but she's so afraid. She needs reassurance from you.

MRS. MOORE: That she made no mistake? She expects reassurance from me?

HEASLOP: Oh, there's no mistake. She is quite sure. But she is frightened, and can't seem to stop crying. Oh, if only you'd been with her . . .

MRS. MOORE: I was with her . . .

HEASLOP: I mean, in the cave as a witness.

MRS. MOORE: Those caves have no witnesses. It was pitch dark, anyway.

HEASLOP: But nothing would have happened.

MRS. MOORE: You cannot have her arrogance without something happening.

HEASLOP: Arrogance? Adela arrogant? Why, she's the most modest creature in the world . . . all she wanted was to be useful and do some good.

MRS. MOORE: Exactly. Arrogance.

HEASLOP: And even now . . . even when she's so ill, she's worried about the trouble to others.

MRS. MOORE [*laughs harshly*]: You see?

HEASLOP: Mother, I don't see at all.

MRS. MOORE: If you don't see, you don't see. The Professor told us . . . warned us . . . that there was nothing to see at the caves except with the inner eye. [*turning to* RONNY *suddenly*] Is she so special that she cannot come to terms?

HEASLOP: Come to terms with what?

MRS. MOORE: With India. With herself. And she worries about causing trouble. Ronny, you have always asked such silly questions.

HEASLOP: Perhaps it was just that you couldn't answer them. Adela could . . . she was always clear, definite . . . it was the first thing about her that I really . . .

MRS. MOORE: I suppose you will marry her after all?

HEASLOP: Mother! What an extraordinary thing to say! How could I let her down now? We'll be married in the hills this summer as we planned.

MRS. MOORE: Love in the heat. Marriage in the hills. Such a fuss! Marriage, marriage. The human race would have become a single person centuries ago if marriage were any use. But it is only an excuse because you are all too frightened to love. Of *love*. So you get married and talk a lot of rubbish about love . . . love in a church, love in a cave, as if there is the slightest difference.

HEASLOP: Mother, will you please tell me what you are talking about?

MRS. MOORE: About the small, kind people. I wish for their happiness. I told Dr. Aziz so . . . in our mosque and at the caves. The ones that can love.

HEASLOP [*hurt and angry*]: Love . . . you talk so much of love . . . vague, irresponsible . . . some young man in a mosque . . .

MRS. MOORE: It sounds vague, I dare say . . . universal love . . .

HEASLOP: You could have turned some of that famous love towards the people closer to you . . . things might have been different . . . *I* might have been different . . .

MRS. MOORE: And what about me? Have I no rights? Am I to be bothered eternally?

HEASLOP [*in exasperation*]: Mother, for heaven's sake, what do you want?

MRS. MOORE [*equally sharp*]: What do I want? I want to go home.

HEASLOP [*almost giving up, wearily*]: Yes, I'm sorry. I'll take you home now.

MRS. MOORE: I mean home to England . .

HEASLOP: England? But you can't . . . There will be the trial in a few weeks, you'll have to give evidence.

MRS. MOORE: *Have to?* I have nothing to do with your ludicrous law courts. I will not be dragged in at all.

HEASLOP: I thought you would want to give evidence . . . to help . . . to help *Adela*.

MRS. MOORE: And listen to those endless, foolish questions? Was he in the cave, and were you in the cave and on and on . . . and Unto us a Son is born, unto us a Child is given . . . love again you see . . . and am I good and is he bad and are we saved? [*pause*] And ending everything, the echo. That echo is India, after all. The end of all our pathetic dreams. Boum . . .

Nothing . . . good or bad . . . love and hate and terror . . . all one . . .

HEASLOP: You must rest and then, you'll see, you'll feel much better . . . But I do wish . . . [*pathetically*] . . . It wouldn't be long. Another few weeks, and the trial. That is all.

MRS. MOORE: No, I have a lot of thinking to do, but even if I were not busy I would not help you to torture him for what he never did.

HEASLOP [*shocked slowly*]: Mother, if you know anything in the prisoner's . . . in his favour, you must say so. It is your duty.

MRS. MOORE [*cynically*]: One knows people's characters, as you call them. I feel it is not the kind of thing he could do.

HEASLOP: That is no defence.

MRS. MOORE: None.

HEASLOP: Have you no evidence . . . concrete evidence?

MRS. MOORE: None.

HEASLOP: Then, Mother . . .

MRS. MOORE [*scornfully*]: Evidence.

HEASLOP: Then, you're being most inconsiderate to Adela . . .

MRS. MOORE: Why should I worry about her when everything I have ever believed in turns out to be meaningless . . . the good, small, loving people.

HEASLOP: Please . . . Mother . . . please listen . . . [*with difficulty*] I've never asked you . . . this sort of thing before . . . we've never been close . . . but for Adela, whom I . . . [*with great embarrassment*] whom I love

[MRS. MOORE *laughs abruptly, and* HEASLOP *continues in a hopeless voice*] Won't you come and see her at least?

MRS. MOORE: No, Ronny, I will not. [*he turns away in despair*] I wish only to be left in peace to live out my days knowing what I now know.

HEASLOP [*exhausted*]: Very well, Mother, very well . . .

MRS. MOORE [*in a monotone*]: Not justice, peace, retribution, goodness . . .

HEASLOP: Oh Mother . . .

MRS. MOORE: Just some part of the truth . . . if it is the truth . . .

HEASLOP: You really must rest. It will all work out. Come, we'll go home.

MRS. MOORE [*standing up briskly*]: Yes, Ronny. Yes. I am going home now.

CURTAIN

ACT THREE

The scene is a very simply arranged tropical court-room—a colonial magistrate's court, consequently there is no jury stand. There are slatted doors on each side of the stage, leading to the verandahs where crowds of spectators gather during the trial. At the back of the room is a low dais on which an imposing wooden chair and table are for the magistrate. On the wall above the dais is draped a Union Jack, and immediately below it a large tinted photograph of King George V and Queen Mary in their Durbar robes. Two tables, with several chairs around them, face the dais—these are for the defence lawyers and the prosecutors. Wooden benches without backs are set out for the public. The witness-box is set on one side between the benches and the dais.

When the curtain rises a very young and extraordinary beautiful INDIAN SERVANT *is sitting cross-legged against the back wall, on the magistrate's dais. He is naked to the waist, wears a white muslin loin-cloth, is bare-headed. Around the big toe of one bare foot is wound the string of the punkah. The string stretches from his toe up to the ceiling, passes over a pulley and connects with a long wooden pole which extends almost the width of the ceiling. The pole hangs by three or four ropes attached to iron rings in the ceiling, and from the pole hangs a strip of*

cloth the same length as the pole. As the YOUNG MAN *twitches his toe the cloth and pole swing slowly over the magistrate's dais, the lawyer's tables, the first few benches, and back again, creating a slight breeze. Throughout this act the* YOUNG MAN *continues to work the punkah, displaying no interest whatever in the court proceedings. His only action is to pause occasionally, change the string from the big toe of one foot to the big toe of the other, and then to carry on with his fanning.*

MISS QUESTED *sits on one of the benches, huddled over, and sobbing spasmodically. Beside her* HEASLOP *stands embarrassed and worried trying every now and again to comfort her. A couple of the* LADIES *from the Club sit beside her, soothing and sympathizing.*

QUESTED: I'm so sorry . . . I'm behaving in an appalling way, but I can't seem to help it.

MRS. CALLENDAR: My dear, it's only to be expected.

QUESTED: It's just my wretched nerves . . . I'm so sorry.

MRS. TURTON: Never mind, my dear, it will soon be over.

QUESTED: It'll never be over . . . not in all my life . . .

MRS. BURTON: Is there nothing we can do?

QUESTED: No, thank you, I seem to be able to do nothing for myself.

MRS. TURTON: Now you're forbidden to talk like that. You're wonderful.

MRS. CALLENDAR: Yes, indeed you are.

QUESTED: Oh you've all been so kind to me . . . it's just that I dread the idea of giving evidence. If only I could somehow get out of . . . no, I'm ashamed to have mentioned it; please forgive me . . .

MRS. TURTON: What you need, my dear, is something to give you strength, something to steady you. Did you have any breakfast?

MISS QUESTED *shakes her head.*

I'm going to get you some brandy.

QUESTED: I don't think it will really help.

HEASLOP: That's not a bad idea. Did you bring some down to the court, Mrs. Turton?

MRS. TURTON: I should think I did. Champagne, too, but that's for after.

MRS. TURTON *leaves.*

QUESTED [*pathetically*]: Ronny, my echo has come back again. Badly.

HEASLOP [*helplessly*]: Poor girl . . . It seemed like a good idea to get here early and avoid the crowds but perhaps we should have let you rest at home.

MRS. BURTON: How about some aspirin?

QUESTED: It's not a headache, it is an echo.

MRS. BURTON [*getting up busily*]: Well, try some aspirin anyway.

QUESTED [*as* MRS. BURTON *is leaving the room*]: Ronny, I'm sure to break down.

HEASLOP: You won't. You'll be strong.

QUESTED: If I do break down, it is of no consequence. It would matter in some trials, not in this. I put it to myself in the following way; I can behave as I like, cry, be absurd, I am sure to get my verdict. Unless Mr. Das is most frightfully unjust.

HEASLOP: No, he's all right. Remember, he's my old deputy. He's all right . . . if any of them are.

QUESTED: You mean he's more frightened of acquitting than convicting because if he acquits he'll lose his job. [*she breaks down again*].

HEASLOP: No . . . no.

QUESTED: Oh, Ronny, I'm so sorry . . . how can I repay you? How can one repay when one has nothing to give? What is the use of personal relationships when everyone brings less and less to them? We ought to go back in the desert for centuries and try and get good. I want to begin at the beginning. I'm not fit for personal relationships. I'm . . .

He tries to put an arm round her to comfort her. She breaks away abruptly.

Don't touch me! Please. I'm all right, really. I just need some air.

She gets up quickly, and keeping well away from HEASLOP, *walks to the door and goes out.* HEASLOP *follows her.* FIELDING, *who has come in on the other side and has heard the last part of her speech, advances thoughtfully. He is followed by* GODBOLE.

FIELDING: It does seem quite extraordinary. She always seemed such a dry sensible sort of girl . . . the last person wrongfully to accuse an Indian. Don't you think so, Godbole?

GODBOLE: You are asking me to decide if Miss Quested acted wrongfully?

FIELDING [*surprised*]: It hadn't occurred to me that it might be a question in your mind. Have you any doubts of his innocence?

GODBOLE *says nothing and after a moment* FIELDING *continues more harshly.*

You will have to answer on the witness stand. What do you think? Is Dr. Aziz innocent or guilty?

GODBOLE: That is for the court to decide. The verdict will be in strict accordance with the evidence, I make no doubt.

FIELDING: Yes, but what's your personal opinion? Here's a man we both like and greatly esteem. Would he or would he not do such a thing?

GODBOLE: Ah, that is a different question, from your previous one, and also more difficult: I mean difficult in our philosophy. Dr. Aziz is a most worthy young man, I have a great regard for him; but I think you are asking me whether the individual can commit good actions or evil actions, and that is rather difficult for us.

FIELDING [*impatient*]: I ask, you, did he or did he not do it? Well I know he didn't and from that I start. But if he is innocent, what actually happened? It couldn't be malice on Miss Quested's part? . . . She has certainly had some appalling experience. But you, Godbole, you say, Oh no . . . because good and evil are the same.

GODBOLE [*unruffled*]: No, not exactly, please, according to our philosophy. Because nothing can be performed in isolation. All perform a good action when one is performed, and when an evil action is performed, all perform it.

FIELDING: But you're always evading the issue.

GODBOLE [*interrupting gently*]: To illustrate my meaning, let me take the case in point as an example. I am told that an evil action was performed in the Marabar Hills, and that a highly esteemed English lady became seriously ill in consequence. My answer to that is this: that action was performed by Dr. Aziz. [*pause*] It was performed by the guide. [*pause*] It was performed by you. [*he looks down, smiling*] It was performed by me. And by my students. It was even performed by the lady herself. When evil occurs, it expresses the whole of the universe. Similarly when good occurs.

FIELDING [*exasperated*]: And similarly when suffering occurs, and so on and so forth.

GODBOLE: Excuse me, you are once again changing the basis of our discussion. We were discussing good and evil. Suffering is merely a matter for the individual.

FIELDING: Merely?

GODBOLE: If a young lady has sunstroke, that is of no significance to the universe. Oh no, not at all. Oh, no, not at all. Not the least. It is an isolated matter, it only concerns herself. If she thought her head did not ache, she would not be ill, and that would end it. But it is far otherwise in the case of good and evil. They are not what we think them, they are what they are, and each of us has contributed to them both.

FIELDING: You know you *are* preaching that good and evil are the same.

GODBOLE: Oh no, excuse me once again. Good and evil are different, as their names imply. But in my humble opinion, they are both aspects of my Lord. He is present in the one, absent in the other, and the

difference between presence and absence is great . . . as great as my feeble mind can grasp. Yet absence implies presence. Absence is not non-existence. And we are therefore entitled to repeat [*he bursts into a snatch of song—the same as the one he sang at the tea party*] or, "Come, come, come, come."

FIELDING [*in despair*]: Don't you care what happens to Aziz?

GODBOLE: It has already happened. Guilty or innocent, it doesn't matter. The change is made and all our lives are changed with it. We cannot escape that.

FIELDING [*restlessly*]: I can only hope that our defence counsel Amritrao doesn't share your views.

GODBOLE: He is highly respected in Calcutta. A very clever man.

FIELDING [*eagerly*]: Do you know him? Is he good? I was hoping very much to have a few words with him before the trial.

GODBOLE: He is most probably resting. He came up on the night train. I do not know him but I have no doubt he will give of his best to the case.

FIELDING: Oh I dare say.

Enter HAMIDULLAH, *a plump middle-aged man, dressed in orthodox Muslim clothes—tight jodhpurs, a long jacket buttoned to the throat, with a stiff stand-up collar of the same material, a black, felt Muslim cap. He is an emotional man, an old friend of Aziz, his strong feelings often carry him into impolitic scenes.*

Ah, Hamidullah!

HAMIDULLAH: My dear Fielding.

FIELDING: Have you brought Amritrao with you?

HAMIDULLAH: He stopped in my chambers for a few moments to make some notes.

FIELDING: Do you think he is the right man?

HAMIDULLAH: You will see he is our only hope.

FIELDING: I know he has a great reputation professionally and personally. But I have heard that he is notoriously anti-British.

HAMIDULLAH [*with emotion*]: What are we to do? We must hit with all our strength. I would gladly have defended Aziz alone, but when I knew that his ... private papers are to be read in court ... letters, photographs of his wife to be shown... think of the insult to a fine Muslim lady, a purdah lady! ... When I saw that his reputation would be damaged beyond all hope, then I said to myself Amritrao is the man to clear this up. Let them take warning. Amritrao will show them.

FIELDING: Well, in any case, we are bound to win, there's nothing else we can do. She will never be able to substantiate the charge.

HAMIDULLAH [*warmly, shaking* FIELDING*'s hand*]: At a crisis you English really are unequalled.

FIELDING: My dear Hamidullah, I don't suppose I shall have the opportunity of speaking to Aziz, but if you have the chance give him my love, and tell him, whatever happens, to keep calm.

HAMIDULLAH: My dear Fielding, you actually *are* on our side against your own people?

FIELDING: Yes. Definitely. Although I regret having to take sides.

From one side of the stage, some COURT SERVANTS *bring in straight-backed chairs for the English people, and range them in front of the benches.* MISS QUESTED, HEASLOP, *the* CALLENDARS, MCBRYDES, *and* TURTONS *start filing in to take their places. From the other side* AMRITRAO, *a tall, grey-haired, handsome man, comes in.* FIELDING *starts to go up to him, but is immediately diverted by the arrival of* AZIZ *looking worn and beaten, between* TWO GUARDS.

AZIZ: Fielding! My friend . . . my friend . . . don't desert me . . .

He is silenced and led to his place. FIELDING *unable to speak makes the gesture of a Muslim salaam just as he did in the first act.* AZIZ, *staring at him, suddenly smiles, relaxes, then responds as he did before.* HAMIDULLAH *and* AMRITRAO *sit at the defence table.* MCBRYDE *and an* ASSISTANT *in uniform at the prosecution table. The* PUBLIC *pushes in and finds places, jammed together on the benches. They are mostly men dressed in white shirts hanging outside their wide white pyjamas.* PEOPLE *stand in bunches at each door, and when any door swings partly open, the* CROWDS *outside can be seen too. Everyone stands as* MR. DAS, *the magistrate, a small timid man walks on to the platform. He wears western clothes, looks nervously around. Sits down. Everyone sits.* DAS *signals to the prosecution table.* MCBRYDE *gets up with some notes in his hand. The trial begins.*

MCBRYDE: Well, sir, we are here today to deal with a crime of the most revolting sort. In consideration of Miss Quested I am going to recount the facts as briefly

as possible . . . I will make no moral or emotional appeal, for the facts themselves are painfully clear and require no elaboration. On April the third, of this year, Miss Quested and her friend Mrs. Moore were invited to a tea party at the house of the Principal of the Government College of Chandrapore, Mr. Fielding. It was at this entertainment that the prisoner first met Miss Quested and it was on this occasion that he conceived his intentions concerning her. He then invited Miss Quested and the other guests at the tea party . . . Mrs. Moore and Professor Godbole . . . as well as his host, Mr. Fielding, to a picnic that he would arrange at the Marabar Caves in the Marabar Hills. In the course of our evidence we will show that the prisoner is a man of loose life, that documents found on him at the time of his arrest will testify to the state of his mind and the lasciviousness of his thoughts on the day of the picnic . . . [*looks up from his notes, regretfully*] We want to keep these proceedings as clean as possible, so I hope you will understand me when I say what I believe to be a general truth. The darker races are physically attracted to the fairer, but not vice versa. This is not a matter for bitterness, nor is it a matter for abuse. It is merely a fact which any scientific observer will confirm. (*pause to look back to his notes*)

VOICE [*from the* CROWD]: Even when the lady is so uglier than the gentleman?

A burst of laughter mixed with horrified exclamations greets this question. DAS *raps the table for order.*

DAS: Turn that man out!

TWO GUARDS *grab the nearest* MAN, *who has said nothing, and push him out of the court room.* MISS QUESTED *has buried her face in her hands.*

MRS. TURTON: Do you feel faint, Adela?

QUESTED: I never feel anything else. I shall get through.

CALLENDAR [*as order is gradually restored*]: I must have better arrangements than this made for my patient. Why can't she have a seat on the platform? She gets no air.

DAS: I shall be happy to accommodate Miss Quested with a chair up here in view of the particular circumstances of her health.

The COURT SERVANTS *carry all the chairs on to the platform and the entire* PARTY *follow* MISS QUESTED *up and settle themselves around her.*

MRS. TURTON: That's better.

CALLENDAR: Thoroughly desirable change for several reasons. [*he pinches his nose suggestively*] Right, McBryde, go ahead now. Sorry to have interrupted you.

MCBRYDE: Are you all right yourselves?

LADIES: Thank you, yes. Much better.

TURTON: Go on, Mr. Das, we are not here to disturb you.

DAS *signals nervously to* MCBRYDE.

MCBRYDE: To continue. Even at Mr. Fielding's tea party the prisoner's manner to Miss Quested was offensive and familiar. Mr. Heaslop, when he arrived to fetch the ladies, found Miss Quested left alone with

the Indians. He will testify that the prisoner's behaviour on this occasion was pushing and unnatural. This brings us to . . .

AZIZ *drops his head into his hands.*

HAMIDULLAH [*with angry irony*]: Possibly my client, too, has nerves. Can he, too, be accommodated on the platform? Even Indians feel unwell sometimes, though naturally Major Callendar, being in charge of a Government hospital, does not think so.

MRS. TURTON [*loudly*]: Another example of their exquisite sense of humour.

They all stare at DAS *aggressively.*

DAS [*agitated*]: That is quite enough. Mr. Hamidullah. We will have no more interruptions of such an impertinent sort. Please resume, Superintendent.

AMRITRAO: Excuse me. [*he has a strong Oxford accent*] We object to the presence of so many European ladies and gentlemen on the platform. They will have the effect of intimidating our witnesses. Their place is with the rest of the public in the body of the hall.

Pause, while the EUROPEANS *exchange looks.*

We have no objection to Miss Quested remaining on the platform, since she is unwell; we shall extend every courtesy to her throughout, despite the scientific truths revealed to us by the District Superintendent of Police. But we do object to the others.

CALLENDAR: Oh cut the cackle and let's have the verdict.

DAS [*ducking his head behind some papers*]: I agree to that. It was only to Miss Quested that I gave permission to

sit up here. Her friends should be so excessively kind as to climb down.

HEASLOP: Well done, Das. Quite right.

MRS. TURTON: Climb down, indeed, what incredible inpertinence!

TURTON: Now, now, my dear, do come quietly.

CALLENDAR: My patient can't be left unattended.

DAS: Do you object to the Civil Surgeon remaining, Mr. Amritrao?

AMRITRAO: I should object. A platform confers authority.

TURTON: Even when it's one foot high? Well, never mind. Come along everyone. There's no point in making a fuss.

DAS [*greatly relieved*]: Thank you very much, sir. Thank you, Mr. Heaslop. Thank you, ladies.

They all return with their chairs to their former position. MISS QUESTED *moves down with them.*

MCBRYDE: Well, once again, to resume. I had come, I think, to the question of what I will call the prisoner's dupes. On April 13th, the day of the picnic, the ladies were driven to the railway station in time to catch the early train to Marabar. There they were met by the prisoner, his servants, and guides. Mr. Fielding who was to join them at the station, had been asked to bring Professor Godbole with him. We will show that doubtless *some persuasion* was used to enable Professor Godbole to delay Mr. Fielding long enough to miss the train. I have here a plan of the Marabar Hills, showing the route that the party took. The picnic site

is marked with a cross. [*he shows* DAS *the map*] Just here, in front of the Buddhist Cave.

DAS: Not Buddhist, I think. Jain . . .

HAMIDULLAH: In which cave is the offence alleged? The Buddhist or the Jain?

DAS: All the Marabar Caves are Jain.

HAMIDULLAH: That is not what the Superintendent said.

MCBRYDE: No doubt the point is of vital archaeological interest. But at the moment all Mr. Das needs to know is that the offence took place in the cave that I have marked here. Miss Quested entered the cave and the prisoner followed her to make his premeditated assault. It was dark. He grabbed her field-glasses. The strap broke and she was able to escape his advances. She ran down this gully, marked here, through cactuses, and reached the road at this point. We will call Mrs. Callendar to testify to the condition of Miss Quested when she was found and brought back to Chandrapore, and we will produce documents both ladies signed on their arrival. Finally, we will produce witnesses to the finding of the field-glasses with the broken strap on the prisoner at the time of his arrest. I have little more to add at present. The facts will show the prisoner to be one of those individuals who have led a double life. He has pretended to be a respectable member of society, has even managed to get a Government position. If the defence calls character witnesses I beg you to remember that they, too, were probably taken in by his duplicity. He is now entirely vicious and beyond redemption, I am afraid. He behaved most cruelly.

most brutally, to another of his guests, another English lady. In order to get rid of her, and leave him free for his crime, he crushed her into a cave among his servants. However, that is by the way.

AZIZ [*breaking out in a high, horrified voice*]: Mrs. Moore! He is speaking of Mrs. Moore . . . she was my friend . . . once she told me . . .

DAS: Quiet . . .

HAMIDULLAH [*yelling*]: Mrs. Moore! What is this? Is my client charged with murder as well as rape? Who is this second English lady?

AZIZ: I told you I met Mrs. Moore in the mosque. She was my friend.

HAMIDULLAH: Mrs. Moore? Do you speak of Mrs. Moore?

MCBRYDE: I don't propose to call her.

HAMIDULLAH: You don't because you can't. You have smuggled her out of the country! She is Mrs. Moore, she would have proved his innocence! She was on our side, she was poor India's friend!

DAS [*trying to keep order*]: You could have called her yourself. Neither side called her, neither must quote her as evidence.

HAMIDULLAH: She was kept from us until too late . . . I learn too late . . this is English justice. Here is your British Raj! Give us back Mrs. Moore . . .

DAS: Order! I insist on order!

HAMIDULLAH: Give us Mrs. Moore for five minutes only, and she will save my friend, she will save the name of his sons. Don't rule her out, Mr. Das. Take back those words as you yourself are a father. Tell me where they have put her . . .

HEASLOP [*dryly*]: If the point is of any interest, my mother should have reached Aden by now.

HAMIDULLAH: Imprisoned by you there because she knew the truth!

AMRITRAO *tries to calm him, but he is out of control.*

I don't care. I ruin my career, no matter. We are all to be ruined one by one.

DAS: This is no way to defend your case, Mr. Hamidullah.

HAMIDULLAH: I am not defending a case, nor are you trying one. We are both of us slaves. [*Thumps table*].

DAS: Mr. Hamidullah, I have already warned you, and unless you sit down I shall have to exercise my authority.

HAMIDULLAH: Do so, do so by all means. This trial is a farce. I am going.

Flings his paper on the table in front of AMRITRAO. *Walks to the door. In a sudden silence, histrionically, but with intense passion.*

Aziz, Aziz, my dear friend . . . farewell forever!

Exits amid excited murmurs from the CROWD *outside and shouts of " Mrs. Moore! Mrs. Moore! "*

AMRITRAO: I apologize for my colleague. He is an intimate friend of our client and his feelings have carried him away.

DAS [*severely*]: Mr. Hamidullah will have to apologize in person.

AMRITRAO: Exactly, sir, he must. But we have just learned that Mrs. Moore had important evidence which she desired to give. She was hurried out of the country by her son before she could give it; and this

unhinged Mr. Hamidullah . . . coming as it does upon an attempt to undermine the evidence of our only other European witness, Mr. Fielding, by casting aspersions on his character. Mr. Hamidullah would have said nothing had not Mrs. Moore been claimed as a witness for the police.

DAS: An extraneous element is being introduced into this case. I must repeat that as a witness Mrs. Moore does not exist. Neither you Mr. Amritrao, nor Mr. McBryde, you, have any right to surmise what the lady would have said.

MCBRYDE [*wearily*]: Well, I withdraw my reference. As it happens she left India at her own insistence, and had no wish to give evidence on either side.

AMRITRAO: I have already withdrawn the reference for the defence. [*smiling*] Perhaps you can persuade the gentlemen outside to withdraw it too.

DAS: I am afraid my powers do not extend so far.

MCBRYDE: I take it, then, that I may call my first witness.

DAS *nods, still smiling.*

Miss Quested, please step up here.

While she is being sworn in in an inaudible undertone.

In view of Miss Quested's ill health, I wish to ask the indulgence of the court to present my questions in an abbreviated form so that she may not be tired out with preliminaries.

DAS: Proceed, Mr. McBryde. I will stop you if your examination seems irregular.

The crowd's chatter ceases.

MCBRYDE: I will ask you then, Miss Quested, whether it is true that you met the prisoner at a tea party at the house of Mr. Fielding?

QUESTED: Yes.

MCBRYDE: Was the suggestion to have a picnic, and the invitation to it, extended by him on that occasion?

QUESTED: Yes.

MCBRYDE: The prisoner met you at the railway station on the morning of April 13th, and since Mr. Fielding did not join you in time to catch the train, the prisoner, Mrs. Moore and you travelled on ahead to Marabar.

QUESTED: Yes . . . that is, with the guide and servants.

MCBRYDE: Yes, of course. Now when you arrived at Marabar, your party climbed to the caves, and at the picnic site in front of the caves paused for some refreshment.

QUESTED: Oh, Dr. Aziz had gone to a great deal of trouble. I was worried that it was too expensive for him.

MCBRYDE: Yes, yes. No doubt. Now, after the refreshment, you and Mrs. Moore were shown into the first of the caves.

QUESTED: Yes.

MCBRYDE: We will ignore the incident in that cave, and will only ask you whether Mrs. Moore expressed any wish to continue to the other caves with you.

QUESTED: No. She was tired after the first cave. She did not want to go on. She sat on one of the red chairs. She was oddly silent.

MCBRYDE: So the prisoner and the guide took you on to the next cave?

QUESTED: Yes. It was higher up and around a sort of spur. It was set in the most wonderfully shaped of those rocks. No one else was present. We appeared to be alone.

MCBRYDE: Very well. There is a ledge half-way up the spur, or broken ground rather, with caves scattered near the beginning of a gully.

QUESTED: I know where you mean.

MCBRYDE: You went alone into one of those caves?

QUESTED: Yes, that is quite correct.

MCBRYDE: And the prisoner followed you?

CALLENDAR [*loudly*]: Now we've got him.

Silence. Everyone waits for MISS QUESTED *to speak.*

MCBRYDE: The prisoner followed you, didn't he?

Silence.

QUESTED: I was thinking . . .

MCBRYDE: Did the prisoner follow you? Take your time, Miss Quested.

QUESTED: I was thinking before I went into the cave . . . thinking about my . . . engagement, about Ronny.

MCBRYDE [*gently*]: There is no need to go into all that, Miss Quested. It has no bearing on our case.

QUESTED: Oh, but you see it has. I had been talking to Dr. Aziz about my engagement to be married. And Dr. Aziz had been telling me about his own marriage . . .

MCBRYDE: Well, now, that might indeed have a

bearing on our case. It confirms the nature of the prisoner's thoughts . . .

QUESTED [*sharply*]: Mr. McBryde, I am concerned with the nature of my own thoughts. I remember I was climbing over a rock that resembled an inverted saucer . .. and I was thinking about Ronny . . . and about love . . . and suddenly . . .

MCBRYDE [*more severely*]: We need not worry with all that, Miss Quested . . . It is the facts that we must determine. Did the prisoner follow you into the cave?

QUESTED: May I have a moment before I reply? It's coming clear in my mind.

MCBRYDE: Yes.

QUESTED: I discovered . . . I discovered . . . inside me . . . The discovery was such a shock . . . I felt like a mountaineer whose rope had broken. [*appealingly*] Not to love the man one's going to marry! Love . . . Yes I was thinking . . . about India . . . and about love . . . [*in a suddenly shocked voice*] Oh . . . I remember . . . I remember now . . .

MCBRYDE [*harshly*]: Miss Quested, did he or did he not follow you into the cave?

QUESTED: I'm not . . . I am not quite sure.

MCBRYDE: I beg your pardon?

QUESTED: I cannot be sure . . .

MCBRYDE: I didn't catch that answer, Miss Quested. You are on that ledge, and you have entered a cave. I suggest to you that the prisoner followed you.

MISS QUESTED *shakes her head.*

What do you mean, please?

QUESTED [*in a loud, flat voice*]: No.

DAS [*as whispering and muttering begins in the court*]: What is it that you are saying? Speak up, please.

QUESTED: I'm afraid that I have made a mistake.

DAS: What nature of mistake?

QUESTED: Dr. Aziz never followed me into the cave.

MCBRYDE [*very controlled*]: Now, Miss Quested, let us go on. I will read you the words of the deposition which you made some hours later in the Club.

He searches on the table for a paper.

DAS [*over increasing indignation in the court*]: Excuse me, Mr. McBryde, you cannot go on, sir. I am speaking to the witness myself. And the public will be silent. If it continues to talk I'll have the court cleared. [*The talking ceases.*] Miss Quested, address your remarks to me. I am the magistrate in charge of this case. Please realize the extreme gravity of your words, and remember you speak on oath, Miss Quested.

QUESTED: Dr. Aziz never . . .

CALLENDAR [*springing up and shouting*]: I stop these proceedings on medical grounds . . .

DAS [*ignoring him*]: Miss Quested, you withdraw the charge? Answer me.

QUESTED [*rigid, and on the verge of collapse*]: I withdraw everything.

DAS: Enough . . . sit down. Mr. McBryde, do you wish to continue in the face of this?

MCBRYDE [*to* MISS QUESTED]: Are you mad?

DAS: Don't question her, sir. You no longer have the right.

The tumult in the court grows and spreads to the crowds outside.

MCBRYDE: Give me time to consider . . .

AMRITRAO: Mr. McBryde, you will have to withdraw. This becomes a scandal.

MCBRYDE [*nonchalantly, even insultingly*]: Right, I withdraw. [*he flings the notes on the table*]

MRS. TURTON [*shouting*]: He shall not! Call the other witnesses! We're none of us safe . . .

HEASLOP *tries to restrain her, but she hits out at him and begins to scream indistinguishable insults at* MISS QUESTED, *who sits straight and impervious on a bench.*

DAS [*yelling above the noise and movement of the crowd*]: The prisoner is released without one stain on his character. The question of costs will be decided elsewhere.

Tumult breaks loose. The BRITISH *struggle out of the court as best they can while* AZIZ, *weeping, embraces* FIELDING *and* AMRITRAO. *Then he is captured by the* SPECTATORS, *and is seen being carried shoulder high along the verandah. The shouting from outside increases. Only* MISS QUESTED *remains exactly as she was. As* FIELDING, *in the rear of the* CROWD, *reaches the door, he looks back to the empty court-room, notices first the* YOUNG MAN *who is still working the punkah, then sees* MISS QUESTED. *After a moment of indecision he returns to stand near her.*

FIELDING: What are you doing, Miss Quested? You can't just sit there. [*silence*] Where are you going to go?

QUESTED: I don't know.

FIELDING: Well, you can't stay here, and you can't just wander about the streets. Where's the car you came in?

QUESTED: Oh, gone, I'm sure. Perhaps I can walk . . .

FIELDING: Walk? What madness . . . there'll probably be a riot . . . Why don't you keep with your own people?

QUESTED: Ought I to join them?

FIELDING: Well, you can't now. It's too late . . .

AZIZ's voice from outside calls, "Fielding! Fielding! Don't leave me! Where are you?"

I'm coming! Coming soon . . I'll meet you at my house! [*he turns back to* MISS QUESTED] Look, if you like, you can take my carriage . . . you'll be safe in it . . . send it back any time tomorrow.

QUESTED: But where am I to go in it?

FIELDING: Where you like. How should I know your arrangements?

QUESTED: I can't go to Ronny's house . . . or the Club . . . I don't want to be a trouble to anyone . . .

FIELDING [*incredulously*]: *Trouble?* Good God, after all this . . .

QUESTED: I mean, if there is a hotel or something.

FIELDING: There is no hotel, only the Traveller's Rest House and that's very primitive . . .

QUESTED: That doesn't matter. I shall stay there until I can make arrangements to leave India.

FIELDING [*bitterly*]: As simple as that. [*suddenly violent*] What in God's name have you been doing? Playing a game? Studying life? Or what?

QUESTED [*with no resentment*]: Have you any explanation for my extraordinary behaviour?

FIELDING: None. Why make such a charge if you were going to withdraw it?

QUESTED: Why indeed.

FIELDING: I ought to feel grateful to you, I suppose, since Aziz is saved, but . . .

QUESTED: No, I am the only one to feel grateful after today's miseries. My echo has gone . . . I call that sort of buzzing sound in my ears an echo. You see, I have been unwell ever since that expedition to the caves, and possibly before it.

FIELDING: How unwell?

She touches the side of her head and then shakes it.

Yes, that was my first thought, on the day of the arrest: hallucination.

QUESTED [*humbly*]: Do you think that's what it was? But what would have given me an hallucination?

FIELDING [*shrugs*]: Can you remember when you first felt out of sorts?

QUESTED: When I came to tea with you, in that garden-house.

FIELDING: A somewhat unlucky party.

QUESTED: I wasn't unwell, exactly . . . it's too vague to describe—it's all mixed up with my private affairs. I enjoyed Professor Godbole's singing . . . but just about then a sort of sadness began . . . no, nothing as solid as sadness. I began to see . . . or rather, to *sense* . . . that all my life . . . oh, my principles, the things I believed in, my feelings, affections, education . . .

anything . . . all amounted to nothing at all. India was too big for me.

FIELDING [*interested*]: But that's like the echo in the caves. Mrs. Moore described them in very much the same way.

QUESTED [*eagerly*]: Did she? Well, yes. I was in that state of sadness before I went into the caves, and you suggest . . . it was an hallucination, the sort of thing . . . that makes some women think they've had a proposal of marriage when none has been made.

FIELDING: You put it very honestly.

QUESTED: I was brought up to be honest. It gets me nowhere. In a way that's my trouble. Some honesties are too great to be borne . . . But that still leaves me with the question of why.

FIELDING: Possibly one has to destroy what one cannot cope with.

QUESTED: You mean India?

FIELDING: Or yourself in India, your life in India . . .

QUESTED: Or love?

FIELDING [*kindly*]: Well, it's all over now.

Enter HAMIDULLAH, *exuberantly rushing to* FIELDING *with open arms, scarcely noticing* MISS QUESTED.

HAMIDULLAH: My dear Fielding? What is keeping you? There is to be a celebration at my house, but Aziz refuses to move without you . . . Come along.

FIELDING: Miss Quested has been explaining a little about her conduct this morning.

HAMIDULLAH: Perhaps the age of miracles has returned. One must be prepared for anything, for everything, our philosophers say.

QUESTED [*timidly*]: It must have seemed a miracle to the onlookers. The fact is that I realized before it was too late that I had made a mistake, and had just enough presence of mind to say so. That is all my extraordinary conduct amounts to.

HAMIDULLAH [*enraged*]: All it amounts to, indeed. Speaking as a private individual in a purely informal conversation, I admired your conduct. But I am surprised by your attitude. Indeed, surprise is too weak a word. I see you drag my best friend into the dirt, damage his health and ruin his prospects in a way you cannot conceive owing to your ignorance of our society and religion, and then suddenly you get up in the witness-box: "Oh, no, Mr. McBryde, after all I am not quite sure, you may as well let him go." Am I mad? I keep asking myself. Is it a dream, and if so when did it start? Come, Fielding, let us leave this callous woman.

QUESTED [*turning away*]: I can't dispute it. Please don't let me detain you. I should be going, anyhow. The crowd must have thinned by now.

HAMIDULLAH [*to her retreating back*]: And don't forget, Miss Quested, there will be costs! You will have to pay! Amritrao has fixed the compensation at twenty thousand rupees!

> MISS QUESTED *stops for a second at this.* FIELDING *looks helplessly from one to the other, makes a move in her direction.*

FIELDING: Wait. Someone must go with you... you can't go alone. Wait for me in my carriage... [*she walks out stiffly, without a word*] Hamidullah...

this is preposterous. That girl . . . how can that girl pay such an enormous sum? It would ruin her . . .

HAMIDULLAH: And what about our friend Aziz? Is he not ruined? These English are all much richer than they tell you. Think of Aziz, Fielding. Think of Aziz.

Enter AZIZ, *very exhilarated, active, affectionate, bouncing about.*

AZIZ: Who is thinking of me? Fielding, Hamidullah, think of me in my victory . . . I agree, think of Aziz.

FIELDING [*seriously*]: I am thinking of you, Aziz. Now is the time for congratulations and celebration. You are the one in a strong position.

AZIZ: There'll be a general shifting of position in Chandrapore.

FIELDING: And you and I will probably get promotions . . . they can't very well move us down, whatever their feelings.

AZIZ: In any case we spend our holidays together, in Kashmir, possibly Persia, for I shall have plenty of money. [*cynically*] Paid to me on account of the injury sustained by my character. While with me you shall never spend a single anna. That is my wish, and as the result of my misfortunes it has come.

FIELDING [*ponderously*]: You have won a great victory . . .

AZIZ: I know, my dear chap, I know. Your voice need not become so solemn and anxious. I know what you are going to say next: " Let, oh let Miss Quested off paying, so that the English may say, Here is a native who has actually behaved like a gentleman; if it was

not for his black face we would almost allow him to join our club." [*suddenly changing his tone to bitterness*] The approval of your compatriots no longer interests me, I have become anti-British, and ought to have done so sooner. It would have saved me numerous troubles.

FIELDING: Including knowing me.

AZIZ: Come, come, Fielding. Let us go to the party . . . imagine, I have to leave my other friends and the joyful crowds to come and fetch you myself.

FIELDING: Aziz, I can't celebrate yet. There is still another injustice. Miss Quested is an honest girl, in spite of the trouble she has caused. Do let her off lightly. She must pay your costs, that's only fair, but don't treat her like a conquered enemy.

AZIZ: Must we discuss this now, when the celebration is waiting?

FIELDING: Yes. At least, I must. Aziz . . . look here . . .

AZIZ: I am looking, though it gets a bit dark. I see Mr. Fielding to be a very nice chap and my best friend, but in some ways a fool. You think that by letting Miss Quested off easily I shall make a better reputation for myself and all Indians generally. No, no. It will be put down to weakness and an attempt to gain promotion officially.

HAMIDULLAH: Quite right, quite right.

AZIZ: As a matter of fact, I have just now decided to have nothing more to do with British India. I shall find a job in some Muslim state—Hyderabad, Bhopal . . . where Englishmen can no longer insult me. Don't counsel me otherwise.

FIELDING: I have been talking to Miss Quested.

AZIZ: I don't want to hear about it.

FIELDING: But I'll tell you anyway. I learned something about her. That she is perfectly genuine, and very brave. When she saw she was wrong she pulled herself up with a jerk and said so. I want you to realize what that means. She could easily have got you convicted, and all her friends around her, the entire British Raj was pushing her forward. But she stops, and sends the whole thing to smithereens. In her place I should have been too scared. But she had the courage to stop. Do treat her considerately. She really mustn't get the worst of both worlds. Be merciful. Act like one of your six Mogul Emperors, or all the six rolled into one.

AZIZ: Not even Mogul Emperors showed mercy until they received an apology.

FIELDING [*eagerly*]: She'll apologize, if that's the trouble . . . I'm sure. Look, I'll make you an offer. Dictate to me whatever form of words you like and this time to-morrow I'll bring it back signed.

AZIZ: " Dear Dr. Aziz, I wish you had come into the cave. I am an awful old hag and it is my last chance." Will she sign that?

FIELDING [*disgusted*]: After that there is nothing to be said.

AZIZ: Indeed there is nothing.

FIELDING: Goodbye.

He moves to the door, hesitates, and turns back, taking a last chance.

Aziz, please do it. I can't bear to see you put yourself in a squalid position.

AZIZ *shakes his head.*

Do it for my sake, then. Or if not mine, then Mrs. Moore's.

AZIZ: Is that what she would have wanted?

FIELDING: I am sure of it.

AZIZ [*after a long pause*]: You put it in the only way that I cannot refuse. For the sake of a friend, one must do anything.

FIELDING [*exultantly, rushing to shake his hand, embraces him*]: I knew you would! I knew you would do it!

AZIZ [*coldly*]: That I would behave like an English gentleman? Miss Quested shall go free, and you, Fielding, will be the hero of what you call both worlds, for I shall certainly explain that I do this at your request. I wish you luck of it. Come, Hamidullah, let us go to our party.

FIELDING: And me? Are we no longer friends?

AZIZ: You belong with Miss Quested. You cannot be with us at the same time.

FIELDING: Why not? Aziz . . . why . . .

AZIZ: We do not understand each other. We are on different sides, and until there is no question of sides, we cannot be friends.

FIELDING: Why should we be ruled by such things . . . colour, or politics . . . . it is India that forces this on us . . .

AZIZ [*sadly*]: You see, in the end even you say that. It is India . . . Yes, probably India will be blamed for all the guilts, and perhaps it is to blame. India is a large country, it can probably absorb all those guilts

and a great deal else as well. It can certainly absorb our friendship and make nothing of it.

FIELDING: One day, when things are different . . .

AZIZ: One day.

He and HAMIDULLAH *leave through the doors that lead to where the crowd had gathered.* FIELDING *watches them go, then turns and exits the other way through the door that Miss Quested took. There is silence for a moment. The* YOUNG MAN *working the punkah continues to twitch his foot, staring without expression over the empty court-room, as*

THE CURTAIN FALLS

COMMENTARY

THE BACKGROUND OF THE PLAY

The background of the play, *A Passage to India*, is interesting and significant from the point of view of literary form, social, political and philosophical problems and their expression in art.

First, the question of form is important because it is indeed the basic differentiating element between Forster's novel and Santha Rama Rau's dramatization of it. This change of form imposes curious limitations on the process of the creative writer's mode of communication. For instance, Santha Rama Rau might have felt it difficult to express in the form of drama the character of Mrs Moore and also the nature and quality of her experience in the caves as these are depicted in the novel. This is equally true of Professor Godbole and his enigmatic personality. Drama, as Santha Rama Rau explains, is a 'coarser literary form',[1] and therefore does not offer adequate scope for communicating a mystical experience or other similar abstractions. 'Mrs Moore', Santha Rama Rau declares, 'is a pivotal character' but 'quite unmanageable'[2] in a play and more so, perhaps, is Professor Godbole.

Santha Rama Rau has realized these limitations shrewdly and perceptively, and this is the primary reason for the success of her play. Her task was particularly difficult because by the time she started working on the play and reading the script to Forster[3] in Cambridge the novel had already become an acknowledged liberal classic. She couldn't have escaped the feeling of the wide divide—between what she was writing by way of a dramatization and the greatness of the original. This situation, of course, could work both ways,

[1]Santha Rama Rau, 'Recollections of E.M. Forster', *E.M. Forster: A Tribute*, ed. K. Natwar-Singh (New York, 1964), p. 52

[2]ibid., p. 53

[3]op. cit., p. 51

as indeed it did, since the distinguishing qualities of the original have flowed into the dramatic version.

The limitations of dramatization probably influenced Santha Rama Rau to omit altogether the third section, 'Temple' (of Forster's novel), from the play. This was almost inevitable since the mystical perceptions of Godbole were too subtle and too abstract for a play of action and character. However, the omission goes counter to the modern interpretations of *A Passage to India* in which greater stress is being laid on the symbolic events in 'Temple' than on the baffling episode of the Marabar Caves. Her choice is partly governed by the fact that the events in 'Caves' are more manageable in a play than those in 'Temple'.

The problem of coming to terms with the social, cultural and political background of the play is not easy for an Indian student because the India that is the theme and the setting of the novel and the play has now almost vanished. That India has become almost an entity of history and it does not seem to be a part of the living present. It is of course clear that there are no more Turtons or Heaslops in India today, but their attitudes and values have not completely disappeared. In fact these attitudes have found subtler forms in brown or dark native skins. The political setting of the novel, of the fact of British rule in India and the behaviour of British bureaucracy, especially the officers' wives—these are all part of the political process of the twenties, which has become historical and yet is very much part of the living present. It shows primarily what one may describe as the pastness of the present.

The India of the twenties forms the setting of the play, a period of time when the major administrators of a district, like the District Collector, District Magistrate, District Superintendent of Police and the Civil Surgeon were British and the Indianization of these services had not yet begun. They formed an exclusive group, with a sense of superiority bred by the idea of imperialism, the higher quality of racial and cultural attainment combined with open or concealed contempt for the culture of the natives. Ronny Heaslop's behaviour at Fielding's tea-party clearly demonstrates this point of view of superiority.

The location of Forster's novel is primarily focussed on Chandrapore, a cantonment town (in actuality, Bankipore near Patna in Bihar). Scenes in Santha Rama Rau's play are placed in Fielding's home in Chandrapore (Act One). In Act Two, Scene One, the scene shifts to a rocky hillside in Marabar Hills. in actuality, Barabar Hills near Gaya, whereas in Act Two, Scene Two it is the English Club at Chandrapore. The whole of Act Three is placed in a court-room in Chandrapore, where Aziz's trial and release take place. This is partly based on Forster's experience and visits to the Judicial Magistrate's Court in Aurangabad. The play ends in a climactic scene between Aziz and Fielding who try to 'connect' and build bridges of understanding and friendship between themselves, primarily as two human beings, one Indian and the other English, and also between two races and nationalities leading finally to the realization of the unity and brotherhood of all men, in essence, of all living beings.

While the British bureaucrats in India behave snobbishly and even rudely, Fielding who embodies the values of English culture and education presents the liberal point of view. Both Forster's novel and Santha Rama Rau's play underscore this idea of building a bridge of friendship between Aziz and Fielding, Indians and the English in spite of political dominance and subservience and also the subtle working of the hostile rock, the Marabar. Fielding represents the values of British political liberalism with a tendency towards the left, an attitude which is characteristic of the early phase of Forster's beliefs.

A Passage to India, as a play, is a study of friendship of the liberal Fielding and the western-educated Aziz. Santha Rama Rau dramatically portrays its rise and fall, its human flavour and also its decline into alienation. The political background of the twenties, of Indo-British relations in India, causes a rupture in this warm, affectionate, human association. Thus the destinies of individuals are mixed up with political and social events and the Marabar catastrophe.

The 'Indian' India of the native princes (Forster lived in Dewas as the Maharaja's Private Secretary in 1920–21) also serves as a background, though this is more prominent in the novel than in the play. Godbole hails from a native State ruled by a Maharaja and this is socially and politically a

contrast to what was then known as British India. Forster mixes both these Indias, though their settings are different. However, Santha Rama Rau presents this aspect in a low key.

The originals of both Godbole and Aziz are to be traced to this 'Indian' India. Both Saeed and Masood were from Hyderabad, while Sir Tukoji and Deolkar Sahib belonged to Dewas. Many scenes in the novel as well as in the play may be traced to Forster's own experiences at Dewas, Barrackpore, Hyderabad and Aurangabad recorded in his diaries and *The Hill of Devi*. A perceptive reading of *The Hill of Devi* provides a very interesting background to *A Passage to India*.

THE STRUCTURE OF THE PLAY

The structure of Santha Rama Rau's play is obviously governed by the form of Forster's novel. The novel has a threefold structure comprising three parts: Mosque, Caves and Temple. The play has three acts, though the development of events and character in the novel is not parallel to that in the play. Santha Rama Rau almost totally omits events in 'Temple', and the third and final act ends with the court scene, the trial and release of Aziz.

The narrative sequence of a literary work is an essential element of its structure. It should be summarized, though a summary is an inadequate substitute for the original play. The direction in which the events move and their dramatic significance too are important aspects of the structure.

ACT ONE

Act One has only one scene and the setting is the living-room of Fielding, the Principal of the Government College at Chandrapore. The house is a reconditioned structure of a garden pavilion of Mogul design; the interior is slightly westernized; the furniture is European; the exterior has Mogul arches. It has a garden which is visited by various people. This Mogul-English setting is a meaningful background for the meeting between Aziz and Fielding and the tea-party

which is attended by Mrs Moore, Adela Quested and Professor Godbole. The events in this act are based on the episodes in the 'Mosque' section of Forster's novel. Aziz and Fielding meet for the first time, and Aziz offers his collar-stud to his English friend, which is suggestive of the informality in their relations. They discuss, among other things, relations between the British and the Indians, and Fielding asserts his faith in the friendship between them. Aziz talks of his friendship with Mrs Moore whom he had met in the mosque. Mrs Moore and Adela arrive and are joined by Godbole. Aziz, in a joyous mood, invites them to a picnic in the Marabar Caves since they wish to see the 'real India'. Aziz's invitation proceeds from his realization that his bungalow is too terrible, too near the crowded bazaar and too much infested with small black flies to serve as a place for a posh party for foreign guests! Therefore, he invites them to a picnic at the Marabar Caves. The simple, logical, rational tendencies of Adela are shown in her habit of note-taking, while Aziz becomes romantic while describing the Mogul *hammams* (the baths). They discuss their projected visit to the Caves, and Aziz's simple mind cannot probe the 'mystery' or the 'muddle' of the Marabar. Professor Godbole tries to explain the complex Marabar Caves, but he only succeeds in making them more baffling than before. Meanwhile, Ronny Heaslop arrives and finds Adela smoking with two Indians, since Fielding and Mrs Moore are taking a round of the garden. Ronny treats the Indians with an odd and offensive indifference much to the annoyance of Aziz. Adela is almost shocked by Ronny's behaviour as he forbids them to visit the Marabar and walks out angrily. In this atmosphere of frayed tempers and a formal, cold goodbye, Professor Godbole sings a song of Lord Krishna and the *gopis*. The theme of the song is the milkmaidens' feeling that their lover, Krishna, refuses to come to them. They implore him: 'Come, come, come, come....,' and 'He neglects to come.' The first act ends on this frustrating note of failure to forge the bonds of friendship and love.

Act One moves in the direction called exposition in dramatic technique. The central social theme of the play is the exploration of the possibilities of friendship between Aziz and Fielding and this act projects the initial development of this

intensely human relationship. This act also presents the mystery of the Marabar Caves, the most complex element in the narrative content and dramatic and symbolic implications of the play. Whereas Aziz describes these Caves as 'one of the greatest wonders of the world', Professor Godbole declares that they are neither holy nor are they ornamented. He cryptically calls them 'terrible', and relates them to Hinduism in which everything has two or many faces. Siva is both the Creator and the Destroyer. The Caves may engender enlightenment or obscurity, but they must be seen with the inward eye. The mystically-inclined, knowledgeable Godbole merely hints at the possible consequences of the trip to the Marabar Caves, that the visit to the Caves will engender an event or that it may turn out to be man's fruitless encounter against a hostile rock.

Santha Rama Rau succeeds in dramatically projecting the sinister undercurrent of the conversation and dialogue concerning the Caves. Even a bare reference to the Caves leads to different and conflicting view-points and the informal, gay atmosphere of the tea-party is overshadowed by the intangible, dark clouds of uncertainty, alienation and impending disaster. The events in the first act slowly move into the direction of this final disaster.

ACT TWO: SCENE ONE

This scene is placed in a rocky hillside in the Marabar range. The picnic begins on a flat ground between a cave and a steep rock. Aziz is in a buoyant mood elated by the experience of entertaining English women. While he calls Chandrapore a 'toy town', Mrs Moore says, India 'is the only real country'. Aziz talks of Emperor Babur and his sacrifice for his son. Adela tells Aziz she may marry Mr Heaslop if she finally decides to stay on in India. Mrs Moore feels suffocated in the Cave and she is also exhausted. She asks Aziz to escort Adela to the other caves. Aziz, Adela and the guide move on to the adjacent caves. Adela talks to Aziz about love and marriage. She takes the field-glasses from a servant, and both Aziz and she disappear from sight. The lights are dimmed and the sound of the echo is heard on the stage.

When the lights are on again, Mrs Moore is seen waking from a dreamy state. Fielding, accompanied by Godbole, has arrived. He is puzzled by the sight of Adela climbing down the hillside. Aziz too watches Adela getting into Mrs Callendar's car. Aziz shows the picture of his dead wife to Fielding, a gesture which demonstrates his affection for him. Adela's odd behaviour in returning to Chandrapore has given an uneasy feeling to Fielding. Later, all of them return to Chandrapore.

This first scene of the second act shows the events and characters involved in a state which may be described as complication in the technique of drama. The Marabar visit has turned out to be no picnic at all, but a nerve-shattering experience for Mrs Moore and Adela Quested. Mrs Moore is involved in a spiritual experience which may be described as 'a vision' or 'a nightmare'. It may be either a simple physical breakdown or a spiritual collapse or even an odd religious experience. Whatever may be the real state of Mrs Moore's experience, she has undergone a sea-change, a negative or positive transformation. She desires to leave Ronny and Adela to their fate, to leave India for good, and to take no more interest in worldly affairs. She is preparing herself to die. In fact, she dies in the course of her voyage home before she crosses the Mediterranean. Her spirit, however, returns to the Indian earth. The echo, a mysterious sound, takes hold of Adela's mind. Her will is paralyzed. She returns to Chandrapore in a state of hallucination, and incoherently levels a charge of assault against Aziz. Strange as it may seem, Mrs Moore is conscious that something has gone wrong with the Marabar visit, that Adela 'has started the machine, it must run to its end'.

ACT TWO: SCENE TWO

This scene takes place in the exclusive English Club at Chandrapore the same afternoon. The English ladies are discussing arrangements for staging a play while the atmosphere is tense. Mr McBryde, the D.S.P., is in charge of maintaining peace, and Major Callendar is treating Adela who is in a state of shock. Cactus thorns had pricked Adela's skin while she was climbing down the hillside. The ladies and

others are told that Adela has been the victim of Aziz's advances and attempted rape in the course of the picnic. Callendar says Adela is suffering from 'an echo' and Mrs Moore tries to explain it in words—a 'Boum' or 'ou-boum'. Fielding is shocked to hear that Aziz is considered guilty of assault and that Adela herself has levelled this charge against him. This leads to a rift between Fielding and Turton, as the Collector suspects that Godbole was bribed by Aziz to delay Fielding who missed the scheduled train. Turton asks the English to keep calm and not to be panicky. Fielding asks McBryde whether he could meet Adela who is almost delirious. He also wishes to meet Aziz who is in custody. McBryde politely rejects Fielding's pleas. Ronny Heaslop arrives, and they finally decide to start criminal proceedings against Aziz on a charge of attempted assault and rape. The case would be tried by an Indian judge, Mr Das. Turton rebukes Fielding for not standing up at the time of Heaslop's arrival. Fielding declares that he will await the result of the trial before condemning Aziz. He also resigns from the Club. Mrs Moore has become indifferent to all events and refuses to see Adela. She talks of 'love in the heat' and declares that she wishes to go back to England.

The machine started by Adela is taking a heavy toll of man's happiness. The echo has almost shattered her and her mind is dominated by untruth and illusion. The crisis in the play is deepened by Aziz's trial and the dissensions among the Englishmen themselves. A sense of separation, disunity and alienation marks the atmosphere in this scene which has a profound effect upon human relationships in the play.

The echo and the ambiguity implied in it merely sum up the direction in which the events in this scene contribute to the play's central design.

ACT THREE

This scene takes place in a court-room in British India (Forster had visited court-rooms in Aurangabad). The punkahwallah, almost naked to the waist, is quite a little god watching the tragic events. Mrs Turton and Ronny have a word of cheer for Adela who is in an awful state. Earlier, Fielding

and Godbole have discussed the episode of the crime, and the Englishman wishes to know Godbole's views. The Indian mystic's answers are a puzzle to Fielding because he cannot really come to terms with the Hindu idea of God or of man's actions in this world. Fielding *salaams* Aziz as he is brought into the court-room. McBryde opens the case for the prosecution stating in brief the sequence of events. Adela is allowed to sit on a chair on the platform, but the other Englishmen also move on to the elevated place. Amritrao, the defence counsel, objects to this shifting and the English are back in their earlier seats. The trial is resumed and Hamidullah calls for Mrs Moore as a defence witness. But she has already left India. McBryde asks Adela: 'Did the prisoner follow you into the cave?' Adela says, 'No.... I'm afraid I have made a mistake.' And then she finally withdraws the charge against Aziz. McBryde has no alternative but to withdraw the case. Aziz is freed from the charge and declared 'not guilty'. The trial ends. Fielding wishes to escort Adela to his home, but she decides to go to the rest-house. Her echo is gone and she is restored to normalcy.

Aziz is triumphant and expects a big compensation from Adela. Fielding intercedes and Aziz waives the damages as Mrs Moore's name is invoked. The bitter experience of the trial has made Aziz anti-British, and he calls Fielding ironically the hero of both the worlds. Fielding asks Aziz why they shouldn't continue to be friends in spite of adverse contemporary politics. Aziz answers: 'One day'. The curtain falls.

This, in brief, is the narrative and dramatic development of the play which is only an aspect of its structure. The question of structure or form warrants a discussion whether the play is a tragedy or a comedy or a combination of both. Forster is essentially a comic writer and his novels are sometimes described as social comedies. Forster, unlike Thomas Hardy, has not revealed a tragic vision, and therefore should not be listed with the world's major tragedians. *A Passage to India* has many elements of mixed genres such as comedy, satire, melodrama and epic. The end of the play seems sad, albeit tragic, that Aziz and Fielding cannot after all remain friends, and the entire episode of the trial depicts a crisis and misfortune which might have fitted into a tragic play. However, there are no watertight compartments between comedy and

tragedy. 'The bridge by which we cross from tragedy to comedy and back again', writes Christopher Fry, 'is precarious and narrow.'[1]

The various elements of narrative and dramatic modes are mixed in Forster's novel and also in Santha Rama Rau's play. Fielding's tea-party is comic, the Marabar picnic is ironic, the trial scene is part melodramatic, and all these episodes have an undercurrent of the tragic. Thus Santha Rama Rau's play cannot be neatly categorized under a single, formal, literary genre.

Santha Rama Rau is quite conscious of the complexity of men and women in Forster's novel—Mrs Moore, for example. Forster's novel depicts ' characters who at the end of the book, disappear into life'.[2] Mrs Moore might have been based on a real person Forster had known.

In the play the characters catch the colour and complexity of the original novel, though it is difficult to put across on the stage the subtleties of Mrs Moore's experience in the cave or the mystical insights of Godbole's temple ceremony. Santha Rama Rau chooses her material with great perception, and dramatizes only those events in the novel which can be effectively dramatized. This explains the success of her play.

The third act is the summation of the narrative, dramatic and symbolic contexts of the play so far as Santha Rama Rau is concerned. It is indeed a kind of denouement, a resolution of the conflict. It dramatically portrays Godbole's ideas of the all-inclusiveness of Hinduism, the doctrine of action and the view of the actor. The trial of Aziz is only a social, political and legal form of expressisn of a basic malaise, a vague feeling of discomfort and sickness which is rooted in the human condition, the world of human relationships marked by man's separation from his fellowmen, his lack of affection, love and tolerance. This sense of disunity and inability to forge the bonds of friendship marks the last scene between Aziz and Fielding in which the individual will is superseded by the compulsions of the collective community life and divergent national interests.

[1]Robert W. Corrigan, ed. *Comedy: Meaning and Form* (San Francisco, 1965), p. 16

[2]op. cit., p. 53

Santha Rama Rau's play, too (like Forster's novel), ends on an ambivalent note about the future of Indo-British relations. Fielding predicts a hopeful future for their friendship: 'One day, when things are different.' And Aziz optimistically reciprocates Fielding's sentiment: 'Yes. . Yes. . . . One day.' This seems to be the only resolution in Santha Rama Rau's play.

THEMES AND IDEAS IN THE PLAY

Both Forster's novel and Santha Rama Rau's play have a multiplicity of themes, though certain basic themes stand out prominently. The primary theme of the play is a dramatic exploration of the possibilities of friendship between Aziz and Fielding, Indians and the English. Aziz says to Fielding: 'You see, I think friendship is possible—not only possible but important.' He uses the image of oil and water (an Indianism) which do not mix. But the Bridge Party—'One of Turton's depressing little jokes'—is an ironic comment on the possibilities of friendship between Indians and the English. Another basic theme is that of union versus division. Friendship implies union, a theme which has a human as well as a spiritual level. Its religious significance is projected through the Marabar episode in a negative manner, and its positive significance through the Mosque episode and Godbole's song. Prospects of friendship are bright for a while, and then they are darkened by the clouds of alienation and suspicion. The play opens with Aziz forging a bond of friendship with Fielding and it ends on a rather uncertain, tenuous relationship between them—a relationship vitiated by the political dominance of the British and the political subservience of Indians.

Forster is a novelist with a dominant theme of personal relations and how they enliven and fructify every hour of life. Aziz talks the language of the heart, while Fielding, though he reciprocates Aziz's affection, is a man of reason. He embodies the European or Mediterranean norm, of reason and form, order and design. He is also a man with a developed heart, and therefore can be friends with Indians. In contrast,

Ronny Heaslop, the District Magistrate is a person with an undeveloped heart. He cannot befriend Indians as is shown at the tea-party nor can he really be involved in love. He and Adela both represent a loveless, cheerless world which is exposed to the Marabar, the hostility of the elemental rock, the staggering abyss of the hills. Marabar may represent a vacuity (an inverted saucer), a primitive cavity in which everything exists but nothing has value. The Marabar echo symbolizes this valueless universe and it afflicts Adela and Mrs Moore. Mrs Moore loses all her values and also her faith in social and familial institutions like marriage. She becomes indifferent to human destiny, and wishes to withdraw from the world as a step towards death. Adela is affected by the echo until she withdraws the charge of assault against Aziz, and then the echo is no more. Adela's engagement with Ronny is terminated as a result of this trial, and she returns to England a sadder, and perhaps a wiser, woman.

The theme of the possibilities of love as parallel to those of friendship is thus dramatically explored by Forster and Santha Rama Rau. The theme of the love of God is also expounded through the character and personality of Godbole whose song of Krishna is based on the idea of bhakti or divine love. He represents harmony between the East and the West, Indians and the English, the human and animal worlds. In fact, love in Godbole's vision encompasses the entire universe.

Yet the universe in Forster's novel or Santha Rama Rau's play is too baffling for ordinary mortals. 'Taking my title from a poem of Walt Whitman's,' writes Forster, 'I tried to indicate the human predicament in a universe which is not, so far, comprehensible to our minds.' Neither Forster's novel nor Santha Rama Rau's play is purely about friendship between Aziz and Fielding; it strikes much deeper in the realms of experience and art. It is a play about the human predicament. It cannot be reduced to any simplistic entities. The appeal of Forster's novel is timeless because it encounters the baffling, human predicament. It is a classic because it opens the reader's passage to India and to more than India, that is, the passage of man to God. Santha Rama Rau's play projects this predicament dramatically and therefore it is indeed, in the words of *The Times* (London), a 'remarkably sensitive and faithful rendering of the novel'.

NOTES ON THE TEXT

Act One

Page

1 *living-room:* room furnished with sofas used for conversation and entertaining guests.

grounds: land surrounding a house, especially the lawns, gardens, etc.

pavilion: decorative part of a building jutting out from the main part of a summerhouse of Mogul design.

Mogul times: beginning with Babur (1483-1530) and practically ending with the death of Aurangzeb (1618-1707). However, the nominal reign continued till 1857 when Bahadur Shah Zafar was captured in Delhi and imprisoned in Rangoon.

row of graceful arches: long line of beautiful arches is a quality of Mogul architecture.

Mogul garden: garden with ponds and flowerbeds designed by the Moguls. Shalimar Gardens in Srinagar illustrate this style.

succession of terraces: series of flat platforms of earth with sloping sides in a garden.

waterchestnuts: sweet edible nuts of water-plants.

sporadic succession of people: scattered group of people appearing from time to time.

to steady a load: to keep the load stable; to balance.

to exchange a few words: to talk and listen.

impersonal disdain: kind of objective indifference; an aloofness suggesting quiet scorn.

2 *frosted glass:* nontransparent, whitened glass.

frivolous arcade: passage having an arched roof, ornamental and strictly not necessary.

pleasure pavilion: summerhouse designed for enjoyment.

view the symmetry: observe the regular patterns of architecture and also the flowerbeds.

formulated perfection of the view: design imposed upon the scene and the beauty that marks it.

mosaic pattern: work made by inlaying small bits of coloured stone.

fugitive fragment of a stylized painting: fleeting piece of a conventionalized mode of painting, much too formal in tone.

unpretentious: with an accent on utility rather than on ostentation.

anachronism: representation of something as existing or occurring at other than its proper time.

detracting from: taking something away from.

3 *wiry:* lean, sinewy and strong.

bounce: move in a sudden, noisy rush.

volatile: changeable; fickle.

sense of fantasy: sense of wild, imaginative fancy and of the unreal.

immaculately: faultlessly; perfectly.

walk in unannounced: enter the house without giving prior information. This indicates informality and unconventional behaviour.

wretched hole like Chandrapore: small, squalid place like Chandrapore.

where will the poor Indian doctor. . . . Principal of the Government College: This expression shows Aziz's sense of humour and irony.

to improvise: to compose on the spur of the moment.

4 *to send for:* to call (the doctor).

to know by sight: to be familiar without being actually introduced.

venerable white beard: white beard is believed to be a sign of age and respectability.

Oh blast!: expression suggesting strong feeling of dismay, anger or disgust.

trodden on my back collar-stud: Fielding had mistakenly put his feet on his collar button which had fallen on the floor. White stiff collars are attached to the shirts and fixed with the stud.

wrench off: twist; pull with a jerk.

5 *emergency:* sudden happening; unforeseen situation.

to do a favour: to show kindness to.

sash of a dressing gown: broad band of silk worn round the dressing gown which is used by Englishmen in their homes.

6 *shaggy man:* man having rough hair.

boorishness: (jocularly) unmannerliness.

nerves are frayed: nerves are overtaxed, sorely tried.

beastly day: awful day.

inquisitively: inquiringly.

hauled over the coals: idiomatic expression suggesting the fact of being severely criticized and censured.

7 *bootlicker:* servile flatterer.

no bounds: no limits.

8 *in hot water:* in difficulties.

indiscretion: tactless behaviour.

Bridge Party: There is a pun on the word 'Bridge'. It is a game of cards as well as a party to bridge the gulf between Indians and Englishmen.

9 *oil and water, we do not mix:* typical Indianism. This is a translation of a proverb found in several Indian languages.

uncouth: rough and unsophisticated.

shop talk: narrowly professional conversation.

10 *pantomiming:* mimicking.

'Your lamp's out': contravention of traffic rules by cyclists.

Lord Curzon: Marquess Curzon of Kedleston (1859-1925). Statesman and administrator. From 1899 to 1905 was a vigorous and outstanding Viceroy of India. He also

worked as Foreign Secretary from 1919 to 1924. He encouraged Indians to retain their Indian dress and cultural traditions.

Hooray: hurrah, a shout of joy.

Alamgir: another name of Aurangzeb, the Mogul Emperor.

Peacock Throne: jewel-studded throne of Shah Jehan and Aurangzeb placed in the Red Fort in Delhi. This is said to have been plundered by Nadir Shah and taken to Iran as part of his loot.

11 *Kensington intellectual:* South Kensington, a part of London which was for a time known for its upper- and middle-class intelligentsia.

frieze: horizontal band of sculpture on the outside of a building, used as a decoration; that is, Indians appear to Miss Quested as unreal, non-living figures.

prig: smug, pedantic person or one who affects great propriety in matters of morals.

12 *Aziz's assumption:* Aziz's mistaken belief that Adela may marry Fielding.

chaperoned: escorted; protected; guided. This refers to a social convention in England of older women accompanying and guiding younger, unmarried women for the sake of propriety.

'God is here': Mrs Moore's piety and also the idea of the omnipresence of God is expressed in this remark.

13 *She is an oriental:* Aziz calls Mrs Moore an oriental partly because she responds to the East with a sense of affection before the Marabar experience.

14 *blondish:* having a pink and white skin, yellow-brown hair and blue or grey eyes.

freckles: small, light-brown spots on the skin.

fiancé: man to whom a woman is engaged to be married.

15 *etiquette:* manners, ceremonies or forms of conduct.

blundered: made a mistake; acted wrongly.

to give offence: to hurt.

16 *to call on:* to pay a visit.

put off: postponed.

mysteries: something beyond human knowledge or understanding; inexplicable matter.

muddle: confused condition; mess; jumble.

17 *architecture of Question and Answer:* Structure of a Hall of Justice where questions are asked to plaintiffs and defendants and cross-examinations take place.

justice: while Adela is thinking of legal justice, Aziz equates it with generosity.

18 *nautch:* dancing girl.

19 *hammams:* baths.

20 *voluptuous:* sensual.

extravagance: here excessive use of romantic language and portrayal of atmosphere.

ineptitude: carelessness or stupidity.

enigmatic: subtle and mysterious; elusive.

23 *Elephanta Caves:* These caves are located near Bombay, and are known for their beautiful sculptures of Hindu gods.

empty brag: boasting.

24 *For in nothing, there is all:* One of the paradoxes in philosophy explaining the quality of nothingness which encompasses everything.

The creator is also the destroyer: Aspects of Siva who creates as well as destroys. Brahma, Vishnu and Siva comprise the Hindu Trinity.

26 *The Bhagavad-gita:* One of the most sacred and profound scriptures of the Hindus, literally, ' Lord's Song ' which is part of the great epic, *The Mahabharata.* Lord Krishna reveals his mind to Arjuna on the eve of the war between the Pandavas and the Kauravas at Kurukshetra. It also contains the explication of the pathways to God, especially the doctrine of action, the *Karma-yoga.*

27 *self-knowledge:* awareness of one's self or being is essential for a seeker after God.

28 *antagonism:* hostility; opposition.

to relinquish: to give up.

privileges: rights; advantages.

29 *penitent:* repentant; sorry for having done wrong.

hovers on the edge of intellectuality: Miss Quested is almost an intellectual—cold and rational.

annoyance: irritation.

polo: game played on horseback by two teams of four players each, who attempt to drive a small wooden ball through the opponents' goal with mallets.

31 *sun-dried bureaucrat:* experienced government servant (in tropical India).

bounder: ill-mannered, rude person.

32 *exasperation:* irritation; annoyance.

to fret: to be irritated or vexed.

to pack you off to the hills: to send you to a hill-station where the weather is pleasant.

to make amends: to compensate.

33 *to get round:* to be within reach of influence.

hazards of the job: risks and dangers of British officers in India.

34 *repudiating:* rebutting; rejecting.

35 *muddleheadedness:* state of being confused.

to come round in the end: to arrive at and accept the right conclusions.

all this bother: all this trouble and worry.

37 *he had forgotten his back collar-stud:* this is ironic because Aziz had given it to Fielding.

in a nutshell: in short; in a concise form.

Charing Cross: part of London known for its shopping centres.

sauntering along: strolling along.

38 *to be better off:* to be more comfortable.

39 *rapport:* sympathetic relationship.

milkmaidens: gopis of Lord Krishna who implore Him to come, but He refuses to come.

41 *I can fix the whole....in a jiffy:* I can arrange the expedition to Marabar at very short notice. Aziz, uncertain of his English, tends to use colloquialisms.

to jog your elbow: to give the elbow a little jerk.

42 *mimicking:* imitating.

on the spur of the moment: suddenly; without any previous thought.

Act Two: Scene One

43 *Marabar Hills and Marabar Caves:* Marabar Hills and Caves are a fictional recreation of Barabar Hills and Barabar Caves which are located about 65 km from Gaya in Bihar. They probably belong to antiquity and also to the Jain, Hindu and Buddhist civilizations which flourished in Magadh or Bihar (the name originates from the Buddhist *vihara*).

jutting rocks: protruding, elevated stones.

44 *no head for heights:* inability to tolerate heights; dizziness in heights.

45 *expedition:* journey.

46 *foolproof arrangements:* perfect and faultless plans.

wallet: purse; pocket-case.

47 *Emperor Babur:* founder of the Mogul dynasty in India.

He laid down his life for his son: a purely legendary story which has no real historical basis.

48 *Whatever disgraces....remain as my guests:* There is an underlying irony in these words.

furtive: stealthy; secret.

49 *bottle me up:* confine me; restrict my movement.

50 *echo:* same sound coming back again in the cave.

to chivvy: to chase; to follow; to guide.

comprehensible: understandable.

ominous: having the character of evil omen.

the cave belches forth more humanity: more persons come out of the cave; the cave throws more people out of it.

stuffy: suffocated; warm.
51 *exertion:* effort; exercise.
to strike the match: to produce light using a matchstick
colloquy: conversation.
52 *set out:* start walking.
field-glasses: binoculars.
leap ahead: jump in front.
yells: shouts loudly.
hampers: baskets.
to give in: to yield; to agree with.
to shrug: to draw up the shoulders suggesting doubt and indifference.
never set eyes on each other: Aziz had not seen his wife till the wedding day.
53 *Muslims are allowed four:* Muslim law permits four wives to each man.
to set off: to start on the path.
precipice: steep face of a rock or hill.
54 *mopping:* wiping; cleaning.
view: grand expanse; lovely sight.
a bit apprehensively: a little fearfully.
clambering down: climbing down fast.
55 *to collide with:* to run into, to hit by chance.
56 *picked her up:* decided to give her a ride or lift.
Tank of the Dagger: The legend of this lake is explained by Godbole to Mrs Moore.
57 *to commemorate miracle:* to honour the memory of that surprising event.
to figure out: to calculate.
58 *Monstrous:* awful.
the whole British Empire rests on them: This is ironical, because proverbs are based on prudence and calculation, in contrast to Aziz's proverb which is based on generosity and impulsiveness.
to kick us out: to drive the British away from India.

prudence: wisdom.

offended: hurt.

59 *deeply complimented:* Fielding thinks that Aziz's gesture in showing his deceased wife's picture to him is a great compliment. Muslim women observe the *purdah;* no man outside their family is allowed to see them.

to know about India, not really to know India: This is a subtle point that shows Adela's imperfections.

grandiloquent style: highflown and ornate way of expression.

pomegranates: round, red, juicy, pulpy fruit with seeds.

60 *nagged with worry:* overcome by anxieties.

61 *she has started the machine:* Adela has set the forces in motion which will bring disaster.

flapping about: running about making noise.

Act Two: Scene Two

62 *smoking-room:* room (in a hotel, etc.) where smoking is permitted.

informal podium: pedestal; raised dais.

rows of rattan chairs: lines of cane or wicker chairs.

shuttered doors: doors having wooden shutters.

swing doors: half-doors mounted on springs.

indistinct: vague; not clear.

the affair: the strange event.

enquiringly: with a sense of curiosity.

lounge: reception room.

63 *alarming:* fearful.

Lieutenant: officer's rank in the army.

riot: mob violence.

hysterical outburst: mad, insane talk.

demonstration: public protest; a gathering for this purpose.

64 *to aggravate:* to make worse.

novice: inexperienced person.

self-evident: clear in itself.

off-hand: without preparation.

compensations: benefits which make up for losses.

65 *sceptical:* doubtful; not convinced.

to put up with: to tolerate.

colonial living standards: high standard of living in India with many servants, etc.

66 *light sedative:* sleeping dose.

raving: talking endlessly; delirious.

ducks into the bar: moves swiftly into the bar.

67 *we are mystified:* we are puzzled.

68 *nastily:* wickedly.

Mohorrum: Muslim religious rite of mourning the death of Hasan and Husain, more intensely performed by the Shias than the Sunnis.

69 *spiritual illness:* Mrs Moore's view of Adela's malady is significant.

disapproving, compelling figure: Mrs Moore's silence, too, is significant. She obviously disapproves of the English reaction to the event in the Marabar. She is compelling because she exercises, even indirectly, a powerful influence on other people.

unhinged: upset; confused; unbalanced.

set our minds at rest: restore peace by removing all anxieties and fears.

70 *magnifying glass:* glass which will show small figures in large sizes.

71 *in a monotone:* sameness of tone without change of pitch.

Boum: literal reproduction of the echo in the cave.

baffled silence: mystifying silence.

my jewel of an assistant: ironic reference to Aziz who is the Assistant Civil Surgeon.

73 *biting and vindictive:* ironic and revengeful.

74 *accusation:* charge; indictment.

to clear up the mess: to put things in order again.

75 *premeditated:* thought and planned beforehand.
to grab at: to seize.

76 *to stifle:* to cause suffocation.
to give up: to discard.

77 *concrete evidence:* factual proofs.

78 '*Everything exists, nothing has value*': an explanation of the echo suggesting a total void and meaninglessness.

79 *not edifying:* not morally elevating; mean.
brothel: house of prostitutes.
alarmism: fear and panic complex.
inflammatory: provocative; which will make matters worse.

80 *hideous delusion:* wicked, wretched misconception and misunderstanding.

81 *Mutiny records:* British records of the Indian soldiers' great uprising in 1857. It started at Meerut and spread all over India but was finally overcome in 1858.
finespun theories: ironic reference to his liberal ideas and views of the incident.

82 *to hang together:* to close the ranks and face danger unitedly.
to toe the line: to follow the official path blindly.

84 *detestation:* open condemnation.
appalled: shocked.
to even the score: to settle the score; to take revengeful action.

85 *wriggling out of it:* to escape from it.
incredulous: sceptical; unable to believe.
alternative: the other course or choice.

87 *reassurance:* confirmation; encouragement.
arrogance: Adela's incapacity to see with the inner eye.

89 *ludicrous law courts:* Mrs Moore has now become very indifferent and doesn't care for the courts.

90 *to torture him:* to cause pain to Aziz.

91 *retribution:* punishment for an evil done.

Act Three

93 *Union Jack:* the flag of the British Empire.

King George V and Queen Mary: George V ascended the throne in 1910. He visited India in 1911 when the capital was shifted from Calcutta to Delhi. He attended the famous Delhi *durbar.* Queen Mary had accompanied him on that visit.

white muslin loin-cloth: fine, white cotton worn like a short dhoti.

94 *sobbing spasmodically:* crying fitfully or intermittently.

my wretched nerves: my sensitive and strained nerves.

95 *to steady you:* to keep you firm and balanced.

champagne: kinds of French wine, usually white and sparkling because charged with gas.

aspirin: tablet for headache.

96 *acquitting:* setting free; granting a no-guilty verdict.

97 *esteem:* respect.

in our philosophy: in Hindu philosophy. The Hindu view of evil and good is not a watertight compartment. God encompasses everything, good as well as evil.

99 *Absence is not non-existence:.* The Hindu view of the divine embraces everything. God is omnipresent. And therefore the absence of God is not non-existence.

tight jodhpurs: Rajasthani dress adopted by Muslims: tight breeches and buttoned jacket.

100 *chambers:* rooms of lawyers.

notoriously anti-British: widely known as very hostile to the British.

to substantiate: to lend substance or support to; to prove by giving evidence.

101 *looking worn and beaten:* looking exhausted and showing signs of defeatism.

prosecution table: table in the court-room reserved for Public Prosecutors, etc.

most revolting sort: very atrocious in nature.

102 *elaboration:* more detailed explanation.

conceived his intentions: thought of committing an assault on her.

lasciviousness: lust; lewdness.

not vice versa: the opposite is not true.

horrified exclamation: expressions or words showing horror and shock.

103 *pinches his nose suggestively:* suggesting a feeling of superiority and victory.

offensive: hurtful; superior.

104 *exquisite:* rare and of high quality.

impertinent: impudent.

intimidating: exercising undue pressure, duress.

cut the cackle: stop the silly talk.

105 *incredible impertinence:* unbelievable impudence.

making a fuss: creating a scene.

dupes: trickery; plans to cheat.

106 *Caves:* Whether the Marabar Caves are Jain or Buddhist is a matter for archaeologists to think about.

premeditated: pre-planned.

his advances: his gestures to seduce her.

double life: living two lives at the same time, one good and the other bad.

duplicity: deliberate deception: capacity to cheat.

beyond redemption: he is beyond the boundaries of reclaiming his lost morals.

107 *smuggled her out of the country:* you have managed to send her out of India.

108 *this trial is a farce:* Hamidullah cannot control himself and condemns the trial.

109 *casting aspersions:* levelling unfair charges.

extraneous element: irrelevant issue is being brought into the trial.

surmise: conclude on the basis of guesswork.

inaudible: which cannot be heard.

111 *spur:* sort of ridge.

112 *inverted saucer:* saucer upside down.

113 *deposition:* statement before a legal authority.
indignation: anger.
extreme gravity: great seriousness.
on the verge of collapse: about to break down.

114 *tumult:* excitement and noise.
scandal: act which shocks moral feelings and brings disgrace.
nonchalantly: showing cool lack of concern; indifferently.
to restrain: to control.
to hit out: to attack.
to scream indistinguishable insults: to shout insultingly in a way which is unclear.
impervious: not affected or influenced by these insults.
stain: blemish; dark spot.
costs: expenses of litigation.
moment of indecision: moment of uncertainty about what to do.
incredulously: doubtingly; sceptically.
very primitive: very backward without proper amenities.
playing a game: sporting with other people's lives.

116 *no resentment:* no anger or bitterness.
hallucination: mental disorder in which an imaginary object is seen.
out of sorts: abnormal; uncomfortable.

11[illegible] *[illegible]uberantly:* in high spirits.
age of miracles: Aziz's release is explained as a miracle.

119 *preposterous:* shockingly absurd and unreasonable.
exhilarated: overjoyed.
ponderously: in a manner which seems to indicate Aziz's great, weighty victory.

120 *compatriots:* fellow-citizens.
let her off lightly: let her go without paying heavy compensation.
it will be put down to weakness: it will be construed as a sign of weakness.

121 *She pulled herself up with a jerk:* She gathered sufficient nerve and courage to speak the truth.

sends the whole thing to smithereens: makes the whole thing break into fragments.

old hag: ugly, repulsive old woman.

squalid position: wretched, miserable condition.

122 *hero of ....both worlds:* This is an ironic reference to the Indian and European communities and Fielding's position in either.

123 *staring without expression:* watching without any involvement.

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